

Tourism and recreation in Montana has experienced extraordinary growth and success over the past decade. Led by the Montana Department of Commerce Promotion Division (Travel Montana), the Tourism Advisory Council and the Montana Tourism & Recreation Initiative (MTRI), many of the objectives and actions outlined in the previous two strategic plans have been thoughtfully initiated. Implementation has been successful in many areas, and should be continued. Tourism is a significant contributor to economic development and jobs in Montana. However, tourism and recreation also face a number of challenges and threats which must be addressed to ensure that the industry is sustainable, and consistent with the values of Montanans.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Montana's economic and environmental conditions, and resident and nonresident markets, are changing. The objectives and actions described in this chapter are designed to be *market-driven*: to respond to the needs, priorities and trends of current and potential customers (Montanans and non-resident visitors), to address challenges, and to minimize threats.

This chapter includes objectives, and actions to achieve them, in order to realize the vision for 2007. During the next five years, changes in "Demand" by resident and non-resident markets will necessitate adjustments and modifications to stakeholders' management of:

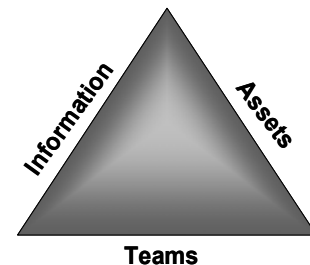
- Information collection/dissemination/exchange, and promotion/marketing emphasis
- Sustainable management of natural/historic/cultural assets and infrastructure
- Collaborative partnerships (teams) for effective planning and implementation

Due to the large number of objectives and actions, the planning team has organized them into the three elements of the strategic framework: Managing Information, Managing the Use of Assets, and Creating Teams. Actions which are ongoing from current or previous efforts are mentioned in introductory text, and only new or expanded actions or initiatives are identified with specific action numbers. Key acronyms are listed at the bottom of each set of facing pages. Other acronyms are listed in Appendix A. Each objective includes a list of ways to measure the results, or progress, of implementation. Additional details about implementation, including a timeline, responsible partners and potential resources to pay for implementation, follow in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 5:**

# **Priority Objectives & Actions to Achieve Them**

- A. Managing Information**
- B. Managing (Use of) Assets**
- C. Creating Teams**



*"Behold the turtle. He makes progress  
only when he sticks his neck out."*

- James Bryant Conant



## A. Managing Information

### A. *Managing Information*

- A.1 Maintain Lodging Tax through Awareness of Its Uses, Benefits
- A.2 Conduct Strategic Promotions
- A.3 Create New Products through Packaging
- A.4 Create New "Destinations" through Special Designations & Events
- A.5 Enhance Winter Products/Services
- A.6 Attract More Meetings/Conventions
- A.7 Enhance System of Tracking, Analysis & Info Dissemination
- A.8 Create System to Share Information & Resources

### Information, n.

1. knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact.
2. knowledge gained through study, research, etc.
3. computer data at any stage of processing.

Source: Webster's

**Additional sources of funding are needed to address tourism facility and service needs, so that promotion dollars are not hemorrhaged to the point of ineffectiveness.**

Information is power. Effective planning and decision-making require information. Successful business and recreation development requires information. The ability to balance sustainable use of natural/historic/cultural resources with protection of those assets requires information. Bad or incomplete information results in bad decisions, and bad development. Nationally and internationally, tourism and recreation are changing fast. The ability to respond to market changes requires information. Failure to respond to markets results in failed businesses and failed public facilities. Public policy decisions require information. Incomplete information results in bad public policy. Therefore, information – good information – is essential to the success of tourism and recreation in Montana. The following objectives and actions are designed to create an effective system of information collection and dissemination, in order to support good decisions, effective management, targeted promotion and rational public policy for tourism and recreation from 2003 to 2007 and beyond.

### A.1 Objective: Maintain the Lodging Tax for Tourism Promotion & Development through Enhanced Awareness of Its Uses, and Tourism's Benefits & Impacts

Montana's tourism promotion program is being outspent up to 10-to-1 by other states. If Montana is to maintain its market share in tourism – and attract high-value, low impact visitors, especially during off-peak seasons – it must maximize the amount of its lodging tax dollars spent on promotion, and leverage those dollars with other partners.

Tourism and recreation are "new" as a major economic force in Montana, compared to "traditional" economic sectors like agriculture, ranching, forestry and mining. Many citizens and elected officials are unfamiliar with state/national tourism issues and trends, and with the current uses of Montana's lodging tax. As discussed in Chapter 2, the lodging tax is similar to an agricultural commodity "check-off" program, providing funds for tourism marketing, research and industry/consumer education. Prior to 1987, tourism efforts were funded through the State General Fund. The lodging tax has provided resources for economic development and state promotion through tourism, without the use of General Fund revenues.

Resident attitude and opinion research indicates that while most Montanans recognize the value of tourism to the state's economy, they are unsure about tourism's benefits and impacts on their community and quality of life. It is appropriate to inform Montanans about

tourism's impacts – and to build awareness of how their concerns about tourism are being addressed. In spring and summer of 2002, the Department of Commerce ran public service announcements called *"Tourism: Good for Montanans-Good for Montana."* It is important to measure the results of these efforts to determine whether awareness or opinions have changed.

Citizen involvement in tourism should be encouraged through programs like the Invite-A-Friend campaign, particularly targeting specific seasons, packages, activities or regions of the state. Efforts also should continue to encourage Montanans to be their own best customers by spending their money at home and "exploring their backyard."

Action A.1.1: Build Citizen Awareness about the Benefits/Impacts of Tourism & Uses of Lodging Tax

Distribute information about the uses of lodging tax and benefits/impacts of tourism through printed material, press releases, tourism listserv (Action A.8.1), Extension Service, economic development groups, schools, etc. Emphasize issues identified in citizen opinion research, and how concerns are being addressed. Show direct benefits to residents (e.g., jobs, taxes, support for State Parks).

Plan and promote National Tourism Week activities statewide, along with other local/regional events to build citizen awareness of tourism. Send media releases about activities to local/regional media. Distribute accurate information about trends of nonresident sportsmen (e.g., number/economic impact of resident vs. nonresident hunting and fishing licenses sold) and funding needed for asset management. Responsibility: DOC, TR, CVB, FWP, Ext, BTA, Biz, Ad, NPO, MTC, ITRR, MTTA

Action A.1.2: Build Awareness among Elected Officials about Tourism's Impacts & Benefits

Provide reliable tourism and economic data to local chambers of commerce and organization leaders to share with members, constituents and elected officials. Send e-mail press releases to elected officials. Host a panel discussion or presentation about key tourism issues/trends at annual meetings of Montana Assn. of Counties and Montana League of Cities and Towns; listen to and discuss concerns related to impacts of tourism, Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, etc., and seek creative/collaborative ways to address them. At the local level, present information about tourism to meetings of city/county officials.

Invite local and state elected officials to participate in educational events, such as tours, National Tourism Week events, press conferences and seminars, workshops or public meetings related to tourism and recreation. Continue to invite them to Tourism Advisory Council meetings, and include officials on mail/e-mail lists of tourism regions, so they are aware of tourism and recreation issues, activities and accomplishments within their constituency area. Continue to sponsor a Tourism Day at the Legislature, with follow-up questions of participating legislators to determine impact of event on their awareness of tourism issues. Responsibility: TR, CVB, DOC, TAC, MTC, BTA, MTRI, NPO, MTTA

*"We need to get Montanans to visit other areas of the state. A visit-your-neighbor program would be great and could be used to enhance our off season."*

- Online Survey Participant

***"Leadership is an action, not a word."***

- Richard P. Cooley

*"Enhanced awareness is very important in order to maintain and grow the support necessary for the tourism industry. A thorough understanding about the impacts, benefits and fragility of the industry is the most secure way of insuring the sustainability."*

- Online Survey Participant

*"It seems as though a blanket attitude that tourism is somehow a panacea for the state's historic economic doldrums is implicit in the question. The public education component needs to address the adverse effects of tourism as well as the benefits. Can we maintain those values and qualities of life we cherish, while promoting tourism?"*

- Online Survey Participant

### Action A.1.3: Seek Endorsements from Communities & "Non-Tourism" Organizations

Share information about tourism's benefits, linkages and impacts with other economic and social sectors (agriculture, ranching, forestry, high-tech, retail, sportsmen, conservation). Obtain written endorsements supporting this Strategic Plan, and tourism's economic role, from communities and organizations such as transportation/freight carriers, food processors/ suppliers, retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, agri-business and arts/cultural, sportsmen and conservation groups. Use endorsements to strengthen support for Strategic Plan implementation among elected officials. Responsibility: MTC

#### Measures of Success for Objective A.1:

- ◆ Results of resident attitude/opinion research about tourism
- ◆ Number of tourism awareness programs/events held for citizens
- ◆ Number of Invite-A-Friend packets ordered
- ◆ Number of endorsements obtained from communities, organizations, businesses
- ◆ Number of contacts/invitations sent to elected officials
- ◆ Attendance of elected officials at educational events
- ◆ Number of presentations to gatherings of officials
- ◆ Number of responses from officials about tourism's economic/social benefits & impacts

## **A.2 Objective: Conduct Strategic Promotions that Attract Top Priority Markets**

Chapter 3 highlighted national/state tourism trends, changes in markets, and top priority targets for 2003-2007, based on Montana's assets, opportunities and challenges. To respond to changing markets, Montana should continue to highlight its outstanding natural assets, while also ensuring that its culture, history and "creature comforts" are depicted (dining, shopping, architecture, wine-with-a-cork and fun for the whole family). Additionally, Montana should be depicted as a safe destination, with accommodations, entertainment and amenities that range from "rustic" to "luxury."

Promotion efforts led by the Department of Commerce have been highly successful over the past decade, as measured by conversion research and increases in visitation. State and regional image advertising should continue, with emphasis on advertising images and messages that target high-value, low-impact visitors such as heritage/cultural travelers, conventions, matures and families. Major attractions such as national parks need to develop "fresh" packaging and marketing to attract visitors who have "been there, done that."

New travel markets should be penetrated using image advertising and publicity to generate interest. Once a potential traveler is “hooked,” they will consult the Internet, AAA, travel guides and other sources for detailed information. High-impact print image ads can be cooperative efforts without becoming unsightly classified-ad style “logo competitions.” Multi-page advertorials that appear as travel articles are highly effective for new markets.

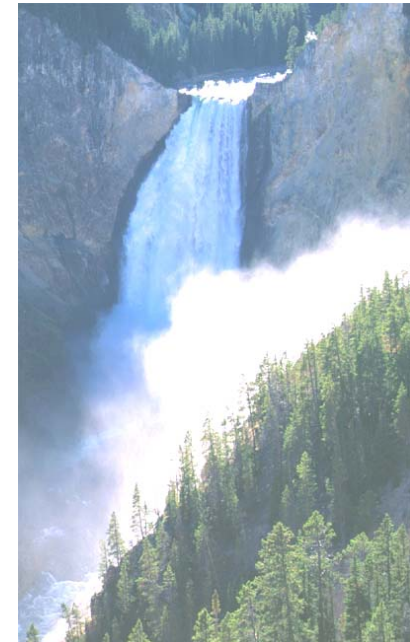
Montana has outstanding travel web sites for which they have received national recognition – and, more importantly, high ratings from visitors. Regional and local tourism web sites also are critical to tourism promotion, and could be enhanced with “one-click” vacation packages, and/or links to sites with low-cost airfares and booking capability. Focus groups and conversion research can help determine which aspects of web sites are most useful/desirable (or not), and how designs can be enhanced to best serve travelers.

Montana has obtained extraordinary amounts of publicity from feature films (*A River Runs Through It*, *Horse Whisperer*, etc.) and media stories. Not all publicity has been positive (fires of 2000, drought), but negative stories are short-lived once they leave the headlines. The Montana Film Office maintains a web site, [www.montanafilm.com](http://www.montanafilm.com), and an excellent Montana Film Location Guide. However, increasing competition and film production incentives from Canada and other states have cost Montana business in the film industry.

The state tourism web site ([www.visitmt.com](http://www.visitmt.com)) includes a “Top Stories” section with current news features about destinations across the state. Montana’s media relations program should be highly aggressive, identifying and targeting journalists/media that produce features for top priority markets; and regularly send them story ideas, press releases and media clips.

Many mature travelers prefer to travel with organized group tours, leaving the hassles of logistics and transportation to someone else. Montana promotes to the group market via online and hard copy group tour planning guides ([www.montanagroups.com](http://www.montanagroups.com)), familiarization (“fam”) tours, trade events, cooperative advertising and direct mail campaigns.

International travelers, particularly Europeans, are attracted to Montana’s scenic beauty, national parks, western heritage, outdoor recreation and legendary images of cowboys and Indians. In Summer 2001 alone, more than 170,000 overseas travelers visited Montana. The Department of Commerce participates in a four-state international marketing program, Rocky Mountain International (RMI), which targets western European visitors through promotion to tour wholesalers, travel media, travel agents and Internet consumers. Montana also promotes tourism through its international trade programs in Japan, Taiwan, China and Canada.



Grand Canyon, Yellowstone NP

Publicity is the least expensive and most effective form of advertising, next to word of mouth.



William Clark Signature at Pompeys Pillar

The Department of Commerce and the regions/CVBs should continue to host seasonal “fam” tours and site visits for targeted media, group tour and international representatives, highlighting specific destinations/seasons/packages that Montana desires to showcase to build high-value, low impact tourism. Efforts to capitalize on opportunities for multi-state or cross-border promotion efforts (Rocky Mountain International trade events and promotions, Lewis & Clark events/marketing, Sled the Rockies, etc.) also should continue, as appropriate.

*Action A.2.1: Coordinate Advertising to Maximize State, Regional & Private Return on Investment*

Plan state and regional advertising campaigns to coordinate with each other, and with private sector partners (when targeting similar geographic or demographic markets), in order to gain better space rates, larger impact and higher return on investment. Use strategies like travel advertorials to penetrate new markets. Responsibility: Ad, DOC, TR, CVB, Biz, Attn

*Action A.2.2: Encourage Cross-Promotion between Tourism Partners & Sectors*

Encourage businesses, attractions and events to cross-promote each other, through packaging, “fam” tours (of media, front-line staff), brochure exchanges, etc. Seek opportunities for cross-promotion between tourism/recreation and other Montana trade groups, corporations and/or products (Montana Beef Commission, Made-in-Montana). Responsibility: DOC, Ad, DOAg, NPO, TR, BTA, Trb, Biz

*Action A.2.3: Consider Options for Film Production Incentives*

Prepare a report, with input from regions, CVBs, agencies and businesses, comparing film production incentives offered by other states and provinces, with recommendations about potential incentives that Montana might offer. Forward the report with an advisory policy recommendation to the appropriate entity(s). Responsibility: DOC, TAC, TR, CVB, Biz

*Action A.2.4: Plan for Promotion of Special Events & Challenges*

Capitalize on the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial’s Signature Events and Corps of Discovery II with “add-on’s” and incentives that encourage Bicentennial travelers to visit other parts of the state. Work with the National Park Service and communities/businesses/tribes surrounding Glacier Park to develop packages and promotion plans that will encourage travelers to visit during reconstruction of Going-to-the-Sun Road. Address other special events and challenges (e.g., fires) as they arise. Responsibility: DOC, MLCBC, TR, CVB, NPS, Biz, Ad, FWP

*Measures of Success for Objective A.2:*

- ♦ Number of cooperative promotions created
- ♦ Overall visitation numbers from targeted markets, seasons, etc.
- ♦ Conversion rates of advertising placements and web site visitors
- ♦ Satisfaction levels of web site and vacation guide users
- ♦ Results achieved by publicity efforts (gross impressions, column inches, dollar value, etc.)
- ♦ Number of “fam” tours/site visits hosted, results in terms of media/bookings generated
- ♦ Number of group tour and international bookings (through tour operators)
- ♦ Continued enhancements to film/media web sites, traffic generated & results
- ♦ Recommendations of film incentive report, and results
- ♦ Success of L&C packages and incentives, esp. to spread visitors around the state

### **A.3 Objective: Create New Tourism & Recreation Products through Packaging**

Convenience sells. Consumers are looking for special packages and deals. Montana provides extraordinary variety and myriad opportunities for packaging of destinations and experiences into “one-call, all-inclusive” packages. Tourism regions and CVBs can assist businesses and attractions in working together to develop and market packages, perhaps by linking them with online travel services or travel agents to handle the booking and payment distribution logistics. In other states, tourism regions receive a percentage of the package booking price in exchange for their efforts to coordinate and market the packages. Weekend getaway packages are attractive to nearby markets (Boise, Denver, Salt Lake City, Portland, Seattle, Spokane, Minneapolis, Vancouver, Calgary and Regina). These markets contain 500,000 – 2,300,000 people, many of whom seek opportunities for short getaways (3-5 days).

#### *Action A.3.1: Assess Potential for Local/Regional Packages, & Coordinate Suppliers*

Identify opportunities to package attractions, accommodations, activities, events, meals and transportation, focusing on market needs, and on places or times of the year when additional business is needed (e.g., shoulder season weekends). Assess feasibility of marketing the packages to targeted high-value customer segments (matures, couples, nearby markets, cultural travelers, skiers, families, Canadians, etc.). Meet with potential suppliers (attractions, hotels, event planners, nonprofit organizations, etc.) to develop concepts, themes, guided tours, dates and marketing strategies. Coordinate development of packages, and logistics for booking/promotion (state/regional web sites, emailings, ads, Travelocity, etc.). Be creative with unconventional pairings of attractions (“dinosaurs and

#### **Packaging Tourism & Recreation Products**

- ♦ Identify opportunities
- ♦ Assess feasibility
- ♦ Gather potential suppliers
- ♦ Coordinate development of packages & logistics
  - Be creative
  - Focus on off-peak times
- ♦ Market & book packages





Outdoor Symphony

*"Cultural tourism fits so well into the four-season visitor mode."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

dining," "skiing and symphony"). Develop pre-planned, age-appropriate activities for kids as part of family camps or packages. Responsibilities: TR, CVB, Biz, Attn, NPO, DOC, Trb

Action A.3.2: Promote Off-Peak Weekend Getaway Packages/Events to "Nearby" Markets

Create all-inclusive, flexible packages to attract *specific* traveler segments in nearby metropolitan markets. Work with airlines and rail carriers that offer direct routes from these markets to develop packages with transportation (e.g., United Vacations, Alaska Airlines Vacations/Specials, etc.). Responsibility: TR, Biz, CVB, DOC

Action A.3.3: Capture More Pass-Through Travelers with Mini-Packages

Entice pass-through travelers to stop and spend more time in an area with mini-packages (for example, a "one price" all-day pass for the Great Falls Tour Trolley, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, C.M. Russell Museum, Children's Museum of Montana and High Plains Heritage Center, including lunch and shopping coupons). Promote mini-packages through VICs, attractions, brochure racks, regional guides/web sites and businesses. Responsibility: Biz, CVB, Attn, TR, DOC, Trb, CC

Measures of Success for Objective A.3:

- ♦ Visitation numbers at major destinations/attractions in Montana
- ♦ Conversion rates of visitors who request package information
- ♦ Changes in spending per visitor and spending per trip
- ♦ Number of weekend packages booked
- ♦ Number of specialty/niche/mini-package itineraries created and booked

**A.4 Objective: Create New "Destinations" with Special Designations & Events**

A "Destination" can be a specific site, attraction or community, or it can be a group of attractions, events and communities, such as a scenic byway, historic trail, loop tour or cultural corridor. A common trait of states who are Montana's major competitors (Chapter 3, Section D.1) is their systems of scenic/historic/backcountry/tribal byways, scenic drives, loop tours, historic trails, heritage/cultural corridors and other special designations (e.g., U.S. 12 in Idaho – the Lewis & Clark Trail corridor – recently was designated as a National Scenic Byway). These special designations are highlighted on state/national maps (AAA, Rand McNally), in travel articles/features, and they provide "destinations" for travelers seeking something special.



In Montana, Going-to-the-Sun Road and Beartooth Highway are such destinations, consistently named among the top scenic drives in the nation. Additionally, four cultural corridors in western Montana recently were created with Missoula as the "gateway" city, and will be promoted with CD ROMs, website and print materials (an effort funded by the Dept. of Commerce, Glacier Country, the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Arts Council, etc.). Montana's 2,000 miles of the Lewis & Clark Trail provide great potential for creation of sub-corridors and linkages between cultural and natural attractions.

Major events can be "destinations" (e.g., the Olympics, NASCAR races, PGA Tournaments, etc.). National and international sports competitions provide opportunities for specific locations in Montana to be highlighted and increase visitation, whether the competitions take place in college/university stadiums, community bowling alleys, championship golf courses, city streets, lakes, general aviation airports or ski resorts. Events like road or mountain bike races, golf tournaments, soaring competitions, iron man/woman, ski races, professional rodeo and others draw visitors from across the state and country to specific locations at targeted times of the year.

*Action A.4.1: Work with MDT & Legislature to Implement Montana Scenic/Historic Byway Program*

Encourage MDT and the Montana Legislature to implement the Montana Byways program, so that highways in Montana can be designated as state scenic/historic byways, and become eligible for federal byways funding for planning, enhancements, improvement projects and marketing. Coordinate the MDT program efforts with the existing U.S. Forest Service National Forest Scenic Highway Program, the Bureau of Land Management Backcountry Byway Program and the proposed Tribal Byways Program. Responsibility: MDT, TR, Trb, NPO, Biz, MHS, CVB, LG, CC, DOC

*Action A.4.2: Use Collaborative Efforts to Create Special Designation Areas*

Form planning groups along proposed scenic/historic/tribal/backcountry byway corridors and loops to begin the designation process. Focus on communities/regions that desire additional tourism as an economic development strategy, and have the capacity to handle additional traffic without negatively impacting local residents. Seek local public input to establish values and parameters for corridor or byway designation, and respect community heritage and character. Develop byway/corridor plans and marketing strategies. Responsibility: MDT, TR, CC, CVB, DOC, NPO, Trb, LG, Biz

*Action A.4.3: Seek Opportunities to Host National/International Sports Competitions*

**Byways, Corridors & Property Rights**

Though some states have taken a regulatory approach to property use and development within designated scenic/historic/backcountry byways or corridors, the federal Byways and Corridors programs actually do not require it.

FHWA allows designation in the context of voluntary guidelines, so that property rights issues are not obstacles to the program. There are several models of successful corridor/byway development using mutually-agreed upon voluntary guidelines which preserve the integrity of the designation, while still allowing reasonable property use and development.

Identify opportunities to utilize existing developed facilities to host sports competitions at times when facilities are underutilized. Examples are college/university stadiums, general aviation airports, rodeo arenas, rural roads/trails, lakes, golf courses, downhill/XC ski facilities, etc. Contact sports associations or federations to explore possibilities for events to be hosted in Montana.

Responsibility: CVB, Biz, TR, DOC, LG

#### Measures of Success for Objective A.4:

- ♦ Implementation of Montana Byways program
- ♦ Number of special designation areas created and promoted
- ♦ Visitation changes in special designation areas
- ♦ Number of sports competitions hosted

### **A.5 Objective: Enhance Montana's Winter Recreation Products/Services**

According to ITRR's 2000-2001 research, winter visitation increased about 5% from 1993 to 2001, including a decline of about 24% from 1993-1998, then recovery/growth of 37% from 1998-2001. The decline corresponded to changes in the value of the Canadian dollar, and the recovery/growth corresponded to new ski resort development in Montana and the increasing popularity of snowmobiling. Montana's winter recreation product continues to diversify with outdoor activities like Winterfests, train rides, ice fishing and boating, and indoor activities like shopping, trade and gun shows, museums, expositions, rodeos, arts events, holiday festivals, bazaars, light shows and parades. The Department of Commerce promotes winter activities via the web ([www.wintermt.com](http://www.wintermt.com)), winter travel guides/brochures, a cooperative snowmobile promotion with Wyoming and Idaho called "Sled the Rockies," and advertising.



Discovery Ski Area

#### Action A.5.1: Refine Montana's Niche in the Destination Ski Market & Snowmobile Markets

Refine Montana's image in the destination ski market versus the competition (Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Canadian Rockies), in the context of desired target markets. If needed, use research (such as focus groups) to determine types and origins of desirable destination skiers most likely to ski in Montana, and to refine the images, messages and packages that most appeal to them. Similarly, determine types and origins of destination snowmobilers most likely to be high-value, low impact visitors, and promote packages that direct them to targeted areas for snowmobiling. Responsibility: DOC, BTA, Ad, Biz

#### Action A.5.2: Package Skiing & Snowmobiling with Other Activities

Once the ski and snowmobile niches are refined, package skiing and snowmobiling with other activities, depending on the targeted customers (arts/history, events, shopping, kids activities, music festivals, competitions, etc.). Promote packages to bolster business during slow times of year. Responsibility: BTA, TR, CVB, Biz, Attn, NPO

Action A.5.3: Expand “Alternative” Winter Activities

Identify existing and potential opportunities to increase alternative indoor and outdoor activities, such as ice skating/fishing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, hot springs, arts/cultural/historical events and attractions, etc. Package and promote to targeted resident and nonresident markets. Responsibility: TR, CC, CVB, Trb, Biz, Attn, NPO

Measures of Success for Objective A.5:

- ♦ Skier days at Montana’s destination resorts
- ♦ Snowmobile visitor days at targeted locations
- ♦ Alternative winter activities/events/packages offered
- ♦ Visitation and hotel sales during winter months

## A.6 Objective: Attract More Meetings & Conventions to Montana

Montana has a tremendous variety of meeting and convention facilities, from large convention hotels to small resorts and guest ranches for corporate retreats. Nationally, the average meeting size is about 50 participants, so many communities in Montana are capable of hosting meetings and small conferences. One of Montana’s biggest challenges in this market is accessibility: the availability and cost of transportation (air service). This fact cannot be ignored, although once participants arrive, they can experience good value at their destination. Another challenge is a lack of state-of-the-art facilities: corporate meetings often expect broadband access (at each seat in the meeting room), high-tech audio/visual equipment, video conferencing, etc. These services are not available in most Montana meeting facilities.

Meeting participants like to experience attractions outside the walls of their conference hotel. Variety and creativity are keys to attracting conference attendees and ensuring that they will return. Many associations use annual meetings as fundraising events, so the more interesting the meeting agenda and venues, the more participants they will attract, and the more money they will make. Creative destination packages are attractive to meeting planners.



Absaroka Dog Sledding

Business conference participants are potential targets for business recruitment. If they like the community, they may become interested in expanding their business to Montana.



Convention at West Yellowstone

Moreover, business conference participants are potential targets for business recruitment. If they like the community, they may become interested in expanding their business to Montana.

Montana's meeting promotions, such as the meeting planners' guide and web site ([www.montanameetings.com](http://www.montanameetings.com)), should be continued, along with targeted, cooperative advertising. Montana needs a strong "presence" at trade events, targeting those events that match Montana's niche in the market. Creative direct mail campaigns, involvement of transportation carriers, and testimonials from previous meeting planners or participants also can help generate additional leads and bookings in Montana.

As the market for *business* meetings and trade shows has softened nationally, competition has increased. Non-business meetings are an attractive alternative, but Montana businesses and marketing organizations like CVBs, chambers and Department of Commerce must work together to successfully gain their share of this lucrative market. Efforts will best succeed with a strong public-private partnership (state, regions, CVBs, businesses and transportation carriers) to promote Montana to the meeting/convention market.

*Action A.6.1: Refine Montana's Niche and "Brand" in the Meeting/Convention Market; Determine Feasibility of Enhanced Meeting & Convention Facilities*

Conduct research on a sampling of meeting/convention planners to identify relative or perceived strengths and weaknesses of Montana's convention product for different types of groups. Use the results to refine Montana's niche in the meeting/convention market. Then implement consistent and cohesive marketing efforts targeting them, such as direct mail and sales efforts. Based on results of the research, conduct analyses to determine the need for, and feasibility of, expanded/upgraded/new meeting and convention facilities in Montana. Responsibility: CVB, DOC, BTA, Biz, Ad, LG

*Action A.6.2: Conduct Training on the Needs & Trends of Meeting/Convention Markets*

Educate Montana businesses about the expectations of meeting planners (based on research results), the meeting/convention markets Montana is best suited to serve, and changes/upgrades needed to serve new markets. Expand the "Invite-a-Convention" program to involve citizens, businesses and colleges/universities in identifying convention groups to recruit to Montana. Implement a "Convention Host" training/reward program to encourage participation. Responsibility: CVB, DOC, Biz, BTA, Univ

### Action A.6.3: Use Local Historical/Cultural Attractions to Enhance Venue Offerings

Work cooperatively to use local historic/cultural attractions, sites and guided services as interesting venues for meeting and convention receptions/events, and to provide exposure and revenue for those attractions/services. Create annual statewide CVB/venue awards for creativity. Use creative ideas in convention promotions. Responsibility: CVB, TR, Biz, Attn, MAC, MHS, NPO

#### Measures of Success for Objective A.6:

- ◆ Number of meetings and conventions booked
- ◆ Outcomes of research on meeting/convention market
- ◆ Outcomes of feasibility analyses for expanded/new facilities
- ◆ Number of training programs offered & attendance
- ◆ Number of partnerships with historical/cultural venues initiated
- ◆ Creation of CVB/venue awards program for creativity

## **A.7 Objective: Enhance System of Tracking, Analysis & Information Dissemination about Tourism Trends, & Implications for Stakeholders**

To maximize the return on investment in tourism promotion, it is important to know which are the high-value, low impact visitors, which are not, and how trends have changed over time. Data collection, management and analysis is time-consuming and costly, but it also is extremely critical in deciphering trends, and identifying implications for management and marketing decisions.

The University of Montana's Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR) and Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER) have conducted numerous studies to measure resident travel habits/spending, nonresident visitation, economic impacts, visitor activities, satisfaction levels and resident attitudes toward visitors on a statewide and regional basis. The research indicated widespread recognition among residents of tourism's important role in Montana's statewide economy. This information is critical to economic development planning and public policy decisions.

Department of Commerce and its ad agency also have conducted conversion research to determine the number and characteristics of visitors who respond to state promotions, and to measure the return on investment of marketing efforts. Many of Montana's attractions and



Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour

*"A problem well stated is a problem half solved."*

-Charles F. Kettering

*"If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure. If you can't see success, you can't reward it. If you can't reward success, you're probably rewarding failure."*

- David Osborne & Ted Gaebler,  
*Reinventing Government*



## Recommendations for Future Research

A significant amount of insightful information can be obtained from the nonresident traveler studies summarized in Chapter 3; however, the following information would be useful for tourism development and promotion decision-making:

- Age of Travelers: to distinguish between Gen X, Gen Y, Baby Boomers, Matures, etc.
- Occupation: to determine needs/impacts of retirees, professionals, college students, etc.
- Zip Code: to determine which major metro areas represent significant markets
- Land Ownership: to decipher the number of travelers visiting vacation home property
- Comparative Value: to compare spending of visitors from different states, different trip purposes, and different activity interests (e.g., which types and origins of travelers stay the longest, spend the most money)
- Comparative Interests: to compare the trip purposes and activities of visitors from various states/provinces (e.g., which activities are of most interest to Californians, vs. Coloradans?)
- Comparative Impact: to compare which types & origins of travelers spend a lot of time, but not money – or create impacts on key assets
- Regional Data in MT: to determine differences in nonresident traveler types/origins/interests in each of Montana's six tourism regions

### Recommendations for Future Research/Analysis:

- Collect information about traveler ages, occupations, zip codes, land ownership in MT
- Collect sufficient sample sizes to analyze comparative spending, interests and impacts of visitors from various states, types, etc.
- Collect sufficient sample sizes to analyze data by tourism region seasonally in Montana

VICs track visitor data, but most do not consistently capture information other than visitor numbers. State-funded VICs track monthly visitor numbers and origins.

Lodging sales and occupancy rates are important measures of tourism trends, and indicators of economic development activity. Lodging sales/tax collections are reported to Montana Department of Revenue, but only on a quarterly basis, so they cannot be analyzed seasonally, or compared to ITRR's tourism trends research.

There is no central "clearing-house" for systematic collection and analysis of data from public/private/nonprofit/tribal sources, and analysis and dissemination of implications for decision-makers. Nor is there a statewide "inventory," or baseline database, of tourism-related accommodations, attractions and infrastructure to track "product inventory." Moreover, consistency is needed in data-gathering methods at Montana's attractions in order to determine trends in numbers, sales, characteristics and impacts of visitors to sites.

### Action A.7.1: Continue Strategic Research about Resident & Nonresident Travelers

Every three to four years, repeat research about Montanans' travel habits, spending and trends. Include analyses of data by season and region/state of destination. Conduct the next study in 2003 or 2004 to measure changes in travel behavior that may have been influenced by the statewide "Visit Your Backyard" campaign in 2002, and another study in 2006/2007 to measure the impacts of resident travel associated with the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

Continue four-season nonresident visitor research, with the following additions: expand data collection to obtain sample sizes for data analyses by region, activity and visitor type from key states of origin. Collect visitor zip codes, in order to determine key metropolitan areas of origin. Analyze the comparative value and impacts of visitors from different states, activity participants, destinations and traveler types (see sidebar). Gather information about property ownership in Montana. Consider allowing tourism regions to add mini-modules of 6-8 questions specific to their region as part of the survey research (e.g., Lewis & Clark visitation), as part of a cooperative funding effort.

Use nonresident visitor research to measure the value of tourism to Montana's economy. Additionally, conduct research to measure the economic impacts of specific attractions and events, particularly during the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial (e.g., Signature Events), and of specific visitor segments, such as the meeting and convention market, group tour market, heritage/cultural visitors or nonresident property owners. Responsibility: ITRR, BBER, DOC, TAC, TR, MLCBC, SA, FA, Biz



Action A.7.2: Regularly Measure Montanans' Opinions about Tourism & Recreation

Regularly measure Montanans' attitudes and perceptions about tourism to provide insights and guidance on whether concerns are being addressed successfully, and to identify opportunities to communicate with residents about tourism issues. Conduct the next study in 2003 to measure changes in attitudes that may have been influenced by the statewide "Good for Montanans" advertising campaign in 2002. Continue agency efforts to regularly and systematically gather and evaluate public input about past/current/future management of natural, historic and cultural assets. Moreover, continue efforts to obtain input from Montanans about current public/private land regulation issues. Use this information to review and evaluate refinements to tourism and recreation management and marketing programs. Responsibility: ITRR, DOC, TAC, MTRI, SA, FA, Biz

Public comments have helped the Forest Service learn of opportunities for improving the program.

- USFS Fee Demo Program Summary

Action A.7.3: Conduct Regular Conversion Research to Measure Results of Marketing Efforts

Conduct regular state and regional conversion research to determine the characteristics and decision-making habits of potential and converted travelers to Montana, and return on investment (ROI) of state/regional marketing efforts. Coordinate this research with other nonresident studies to allow for comparing/contrasting results. For non-visitors, capture information about other vacation destinations (where they traveled instead of Montana, and why). Responsibility: DOC, TR, CVB, ITRR, Ad

**The only real measure of Return on Investment (ROI) for promotion efforts is conversion research. The number of inquiries is an inadequate measure of promotion success.**

Action A.7.4: Establish a Central "Clearinghouse" for Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting

Create a Montana Tourism & Recreation Data Center (MTRDC), perhaps as part of ITRR, to regularly collect information from state and national sources, analyze it, and disseminate results of analyses and trends to stakeholder groups. Work with stakeholders to determine information types/formats to collect, and results that are most needed for strategic decision-making on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Develop a data tracking format that is compatible across agencies/sites so information can be used by stakeholders for statewide and regional analyses, and for collaborative decision-making about management and marketing.

Additionally, use the Data Center to compile and disseminate the results of research and trends, and to compare research results to statewide data collected by stakeholders. Also compile, summarize and disseminate the results of tourism/recreation research from other sources (TIA, U.S. Travel Data Center, American Recreation Coalition, America Outdoors, American Hotel & Motel Assn., state/federal agencies, etc.). Focus on interpreting and formatting information so that it is user-friendly and insightful for Montana's tourism and recreation stakeholder groups. Create an online newsletter for interactive dissemination of information. Responsibility: ITRR, DOC, TR, MTRI, MTTA, CVB, Attn, Biz

Knowledge Gaps: "What managers mean by adequate and relevant research and what researchers can do to provide it as part of program evaluation efforts."

- USFS Executive Summary, Issues & Concerns Related to Fee Demo Program

*"There's a big difference between data and information."*

- Stakeholder Written Comment

*"Targeted research: the gateway to accountability."*

- Travel & Tourism Research Assn.

Agencies need to design data collection systems which provide good, current information on user preferences, participation rates and other topics.

- Montana 2001 State Trails Plan

Action A.7.5: Create a Statewide "Baseline" Database of Tourism & Recreation Assets

Use data from the Department of Revenue, Department of Commerce, regions/CVBs and other state/federal agencies to create a central "master database" that is capable of sorting tourism and recreation assets (facilities, attractions, accommodations and infrastructure) by county, type, size, amenities and ownership type (private, public, tribal, nonprofit). Use the database for online marketing (for customer searches), tracking of visitation trends, and changes in the inventory over time.

Responsibility: ITRR, DOC, TR, DOR, MTRI, MRPA, BTA, MTTA

Action A.7.6: Enhance Data-Gathering Systems at Attractions & VICs

Enhance the system of data-collection at state-supported VICs, supplemented by an effort to broaden a standardized data-collection system to other VICs and attractions (chambers, agency visitor centers, etc.), in order to allow insightful and timely analyses of statewide and regional visitation trends. Include data about the origin of visitors by zip code, trip purpose, size of travel party, destinations, activities, etc. Compare/contrast the data to results of traveler research. Responsibility: DOC, ITRR, MTRI, TR, VIC, CVB, CC, Trb

Action A.7.7: Upgrade Lodging Tax Reporting Systems at Montana Department of Revenue

Enhance the lodging tax reporting system so that properties report monthly sales and tax collections, and Department of Revenue (DOR) codes the lodging sales/tax collections by month, county and property type (lodging versus RV/campground). Provide reports from DOR to Department of Commerce, ITRR and tourism regions, so that sales trends can be compared to monthly visitation trends and visitor research. Obtain input from business trade associations to determine business attitudes about submitting monthly reports in exchange for more timely tourism trend data. Responsibility: DOR, DOC, BTA, ITRR

Action A.7.8: Coordinate with the Private Sector for Enhanced Tracking/Reporting

Encourage chambers and CVBs to collect general trend information from their member properties, compile it for analyses of key trends, and forward general trends to ITRR or Department of Commerce to analyze statewide trends. Include general information that properties are likely to share, such as changes in sales over previous month/year (up or down within a percentage range), traveler types, origins, group sizes, length of stay, etc.). Provide simple, standardized spreadsheets that can be completed quickly from standard monthly business reports. Use insights to adjust targeting of promotions for more effective results. At the state level, use the data as a regular "Travel Barometer", and include trend data in press releases to media. Responsibility: CVB, CC, TR, BTA, DOC, ITRR

#### Measures of Success for Objective A.7:

- ♦ Creation of a Montana Tourism & Recreation Data Center
- ♦ Creation/maintenance of a baseline database of accommodations/attractions
- ♦ Establishment of standardized/enhanced data-gathering at attractions/VICs
- ♦ Upgrades to tax reporting system at DOR
- ♦ Success in obtaining trend information from businesses for “Travel Barometer”
- ♦ Changes in citizen opinions, attitudes and travel habits/spending
- ♦ Expansion of nonresident visitor research
- ♦ Results of regular conversion research, and comparisons to nonresident research
- ♦ Quality, usefulness & regularity of information disseminated by Data Center

### **A.8 Objective: Create a Connected System to Share Information & Resources**

Communication and networking are essential to successful tourism and recreation in Montana. Many resources are available to stakeholders, but often, information about the resources is not widely available, or there are disconnects in communication between agencies, sectors, organizations that provide support, and those who need support or assistance. An integrated system to share information and resources will strengthen the quality of tourism facilities, services and promotion efforts statewide.

*"I feel it is important that the residents of Montana are involved in tourism and recreation in Montana."*

- Online Survey Participant

#### Action A.8.1: Create a Tourism & Recreation Listserv to Share Information

Establish a listserv for any/all tourism and recreation stakeholders who wish to participate, and share information about research, visitor data, trends, announcements, seminar content from national/international meetings, etc. Additionally, provide information from stakeholders to each other and the public via organization newsletters, meetings and press releases. Responsibility: ITRR, DOC, MTC, MTRI, MTTA, TR, NPO

#### Action A.8.2: Create a Database of Tourism/Recreation Technical & Funding Resources

Develop a database of tourism and recreation-related resources for funding and technical assistance which are available to businesses and non.

profit organizations (see Appendix C). If practical, collaborate with existing organizations who provide resource sites, such as the Department of Commerce’s Montana Finance Information Center website

(www.mtfinanceonline.com), the Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA), University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER, www.bber.umt.edu), Montana Rural Development Partners (MRDP) and Montana Department of Labor & Industry. Responsibility: DOC, MEDA, BBER, MRDP, DLI

*Action A.8.3: Share Information about State/Regional Advertising Plans to Facilitate Coordination*

Schedule meetings to share information about Department of Commerce advertising plans with regions/CVBs, and vice-versa, before state and regional marketing plans are finalized. Discuss ideas for mutual target markets, cooperative efforts, and ways to effectively track and measure results of high-impact cooperative efforts (conversions, ROI). Additionally, share information with businesses who also may want to participate in cooperative advertising efforts for image campaigns and advertorial features. Responsibility: DOC, Ad, TR, CVB, Biz

*Action A.8.4: Enhance Sharing of Tourism & Recreation Photo Libraries*

Maximize the use of funds for tourism photography by creating a central online photo library for tourism stakeholder groups to use. Encourage Department of Commerce, regions, CVBs, nonprofit organizations and other state/federal agencies to contribute to and use the online library via electronic file sharing. Responsibility: DOC, TR, CVB, NPO, MTRI

Measures of Success for Objective A.8:

- ♦ Establishment and use of listserv in 2003
- ♦ Establishment of central online photo library, and amount of use
- ♦ Creation, dissemination and updating of resource database
- ♦ Regional/Dept. of Commerce advertising planning meetings beginning in 2003

## B. Managing the Use of Assets

Sustainability. High quality. Preservation. Responsible, shared use. Maintenance and operations. Access. Balance. Because of its vast, rural land base, Montana's tourism and recreation assets are linked to its extraordinary mountains, forests, rivers, lakes and plains, as well as to its outstanding historic and cultural assets. Managing the use of those assets is a complex and difficult balancing act, often invoking strong and diverse opinions among Montanans. Chapter 2 discusses the natural/historic/cultural/man-made assets that support tourism and recreation, as well as asset management challenges and threats. This section lists priority actions that are designed to address the challenges of sustainable asset management, based on input from public meetings, agencies and numerous stakeholder groups.

Outreach efforts by the planning team found overwhelming interest in, and support of, best-practices management and minimal negative impact on Montana's natural, historic and cultural assets. Montanans expressed that tourism and economic growth/jobs are generally desirable for the state, but that increasing visitation and population growth must be balanced with sustainability. Moreover, maintenance of tourism and recreation-related infrastructure for both resident and nonresident use is paramount to successful tourism and economic development in Montana.

Rising population and visitor numbers mean increased use of natural and man-made assets, and accelerated costs for infrastructure, staffing, maintenance, interpretation, waste removal and utilities. As demand increases, additional and reliable resources are necessary.

Certain lands and waters in Montana are specially designated by the state or Congress for restricted use and development (i.e. wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, primitive areas, endangered species habitat, wetlands, etc.). Use of public land is largely determined through agency planning processes, and by law, the public must be included in the process of developing these plans. Unfortunately, timely completion and implementation of these plans often is inhibited by agency funding and/or staffing challenges, appeals and lawsuits.

This section of Chapter 5 lists actions (many of which are currently ongoing and successful), to achieve sustainable management strategies, reduce negative impacts, and protect/improve Montana's natural and man-made assets.

### B. Managing the Use of Assets

- B.1 Balance Asset Protection & Visitor/Business Needs
- B.2 Address Access Issues on Public & Private Lands/Waters
- B.3 Develop an Enhanced Transportation System
- B.4 Create a Comprehensive "System" of Visitor Information
- B.5 Improve Statewide System of Highway Signs
- B.6 Assist Communities with Tourism while Respecting Local Values

### "Assets" vs. "Resources"

The words "asset" and "resource" are used in many contexts. For the purposes of this Strategic Plan document, **"assets"** refer to natural, historical and cultural attributes, places or events that visitors seek in Montana. Assets also include tourism and recreation infrastructure, such as roads, rest areas, VICs, airports and transportation carriers, and community assets, like parks, golf courses, historic downtowns, etc.

**"Resources"** refer to sources of support or aid, such as funding, information, education and technical assistance.

*"Tourism must recognize the need for a balance between capacity and demand. Somewhere the industry needs to state and recognize capacity and crowding issues, and either identify that they will balance increased opportunities with resource capacity and demand, or need to support the addition of more lands to the public access system - and even doing that needs to be balanced with wildlife and social impact concerns."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

...communities are demonstrating that economic prosperity doesn't have to degrade natural surroundings, rob them of their character, or turn them into crowded tourist traps.

- Gateway Communities, Edward T. McMahon, Spring 1999

## **B.1 Objective: Seek Balance Between Asset Protection & Visitor/Business Needs**

Sustainable use and protection of Montana's natural, historic and cultural assets must be balanced with the needs of Montana residents, businesses and visitors. The process to achieve this balance requires stewardship and cooperation, and entails an inventory/evaluation of assets and needs; planning and policy development; regulation/licensing where necessary; and monitoring of use and its impacts. Montanans are accustomed to unlimited access to many natural assets, yet as both resident and nonresident use has increased, limits may be necessary to protect the places that Montanans value so highly. Along with evaluating the physical impacts on assets, local values and multiple use also must be considered in determining desired visitation levels.

The number of guided outdoor recreation businesses has increased in Montana (rafting, kayaking, biking, hiking, horse trips, etc.) as more residents and nonresidents seek professionals to provide the equipment, skills and interpretation that they lack to enjoy the outdoors. In many places, land/river managers cannot determine the number of businesses or visitors using a specific area (such as the Blackfoot River east of Missoula) because there is no licensing or reporting mechanism.

### Action B.1.1: Compile an Inventory/Evaluation of Natural/Historic/Cultural Assets & Facilities

Conduct a survey of natural/historic/cultural asset and facility managers to gather information about existing assets, their current conditions, needs and threats (outdoor recreation facilities are included in the FWP SCORP<sup>1</sup> process). Compile an inventory of key assets as part of a statewide database (see Action A.7.5). Evaluate and prioritize conditions, needs and threats, and determine estimated costs to address them. Determine list of highest priority needs/projects (e.g., "top 10", "top 20"), and focus on collaborative strategies to address them. Responsibility: SA, FA, Trb, LG, NPO, Biz, MTRI, MRPA

### Action B.1.2: Select Management Options that Emphasize Balanced Resident & Nonresident Use

Consider the values and desires of local residents and communities when making management decisions about use levels of natural/historic/cultural assets. Involve residents, community leaders, businesses, elected officials and interest groups in discussions about desirable balance between nonresident visitation and local quality of life. Use research about current/future conditions, trends,

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<sup>1</sup> Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)



carrying capacity, supply and demand to inform decisions about asset use. Improve coordination between communities, agencies, tribes, businesses and non-profit interest groups (sportsmen, conservation, cultural, etc.). Develop MOU's where appropriate to create partnerships and share resources. Monitor tourism and recreation impacts by communicating with users, businesses, communities, tribes, etc., while improving mechanisms for visitor data collection.

Responsibility: SA, FA, Trb, LG, NPO, Biz

Action B.1.3: Develop Systems of Allocated Use in Sensitive Areas

Create policies, limits and systems of allocated use where necessary to accommodate public use while protecting and restoring assets. Utilize interagency/interregional coordination assisted by public, private and non-profit user input to assist decision-making processes. Amplify signing and information materials to educate the public about low-impact visitation ("pack in/pack out", use of fire pans and portable toilets, etc.). Continue visitor use management systems, and limit numbers of visitor permits for guided and non-guided trips in areas where visitor numbers are degrading assets. Continue road and trailhead management policies, as needed, to allocate use in areas sensitized by overuse, weather or biological concerns. Responsibility: SA, FA, Trb, NPO, Leg, FWP Commis., Outfitters Licensing Board

Action B.1.4: Evaluate Licensing for All Guided Recreation Activities that Involve Safety Risk

Consider state licensing and bonding of all commercial guided recreation activities that present a public safety risk. Evaluate the number of outfitters/guides and their guests that can use an area without exceeding its carrying capacity, taking into account a balanced, corresponding number of non-guided use. Determine outfitter/guide allocations that allow reasonable access to visitors who need a guide, as well as to those who do not. Responsibility: Outfitters Licensing Board, Leg, SA, FA, BTA

Action B.1.5: Address Motorized vs. Non-Motorized Recreation User Conflicts

Emphasize cooperation between land managers/owners and user groups to help maintain or create opportunities/areas which separate (or disperse) motorized and non-motorized use, and consider user conflicts in trail planning. Develop partnerships to establish and maintain designated public or privately-owned areas for "motorized parks". Support agency programs to retain both motorized and non-motorized trails, while protecting assets and preventing overuse. Set use limits where necessary, and disseminate responsible trail use education materials. Responsibility: SA, FA, NPO, LO, Biz, LG

Action B.1.6: Address Invasive Species Problems through Partnerships & Educational Programs

*"Increases in the numbers of tourists should not overwhelm existing infrastructure and opportunities. Growth should be based on the ability to handle the influx without negative impacts."*

- Online Survey Participant



Snowmobiling in Montana

*"The snowmobile tourism industry should be actively engaged in efforts to forge acceptable compromises with wilderness/quiet trail advocates. Motorized and non-motorized advocates need to work together to carve up the turf, so to speak,... Otherwise, continued conflict will result in continued controversy and uncertainty for the industry."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

*"It is our task in our time and in our generation to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours."*

- John F. Kennedy

Implement agency, county and municipal invasive species plans (noxious weeds, zebra mussels) and management strategies (e.g. Montana State Trails Plan, USFS Landscape Stewardship, USFWS invasive species protocol). Educate resident and nonresident travelers regarding prevention and control measures necessary to eradicate invasive species. Use informational brochures, press releases, public service announcements, agency web sites, workshops, etc. Continue partnerships between management agency staff, volunteers, user groups, schools, 4-H groups, conservation districts, agricultural industry and media to effectively address the issue. Responsibility: SA, FA, DOAg, RC&D, NPO, LO, Biz

Action B.1.7: Encourage Appropriate Use of Land Conservancy Programs

Build awareness of federal programs that conserve agricultural lands and natural areas, such as conservation easements, Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, and Farmland Protection Program. Advocate for continuation of conservancy programs. Responsibility: FA, DOAg, Ext, LO, NPO

Measures of Success for Objective B.1:

- ◆ Creation of statewide database of natural/historic/cultural assets and facilities
- ◆ Amount of local involvement in decisions regarding asset multiple use and management
- ◆ Prevention of damage to sensitive assets/recovery of degraded areas
- ◆ Level of consensus between motorized and non-motorized users
- ◆ Decrease of infestation of invasive species
- ◆ Increase in acreage enrolled in conservancy programs

**B.2: Objective: Address Access Issues on Public & Private Lands & Waters**

Montana is about one-third public land (35%), nearly two-thirds private land (61%), and five percent tribal land. Montanans historically have enjoyed access not only to public lands, but also to much of the state's privately-owned lands for recreational purposes – especially hunting and fishing. However, in recent years, economic pressures on farmers, ranchers and timber companies have forced closures or sale of private lands for recreational leases and residential development resulting in reduced access. At the same time, federal and state budgets and environmental issues have curtailed agencies' abilities to construct and maintain access roads and trails on public lands. The population of Montana, and the number of nonresident visitors, has increased in the past decade, creating more demand on diminishing accessible lands and waters. Loss of access to public and private lands, and limits on

**Block Management Program**

From 1996 to 2001, the number of participating landowners increased from 796 to 1,075 (35%); enrolled acreage increased from 7.1 million to 8.7 million acres (22%); and estimated hunter days increased from 212,301 to 347,915 (6%).

Source: FWP

methods/modes of access, has created increasing conflicts among user groups in Montana. Several programs are currently in place, and achieving success, to address access issues:

- ♦ Access Montana, a program to protect and improve public access to isolated state and federal lands, emphasizing a cooperative approach to the resolution of sportsman/landowner/agency conflicts involving public land access.
- ♦ Montana's Block Management Program, established in 1985 to create cooperative agreements between private landowners, public agencies, and Fish, Wildlife & Parks to provide free public hunting opportunities on private lands and isolated public lands. FWP pays private landowners a nominal fee for allowing hunters access to their property to harvest big game, upland game birds, and waterfowl. The program is funded through nonresident outfitted big game licenses, nonresident upland game bird licenses, and a Hunter Access Enhancement Fee paid by all resident and nonresident hunters.

A number of special task forces have been formed to address specific issues related to public land access (see sidebar). The intent of the task forces is to foster agency agreement on access issues; and better cooperation between land management agencies and private groups.

Action B.2.1: Support Implementation of Strategies to Improve Access to Public Lands & Waters

Support efforts of federal and state agencies to acquire easements, and to exchange or purchase land from willing private landowners, in order to preserve access to public lands and waters. Include easements for access when recreational agreements are being purchased. Implement the access strategies identified in the 2001 Montana State Trails Plan. Continue to publish and distribute the *Montana Access Guide to Federal & State Lands*, and the Access Montana program to protect and improve public recreation access to isolated state and federal lands. Responsibility: SA, FA, Trb, NPO, LO

Action B.2.2: Expand the Block Management Program for Access to Private Lands

Support the efforts of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to expand Montana's Block Management Program for access to private lands. Consider increase in fees paid to landowners to compensate for costs of public use impacts, and as incentive to encourage broader participation. Responsibility: FWP, LO, TR, NPO

Action B.2.3: Use Special Groups to Facilitate Discussion of Access to Public/Private Lands & Waters

**Land & Water Access Task Forces**

**Montana Interagency Access Council (MIAC)**, formed in mid-1990's as informal ad hoc group of state, federal and local land management agencies and groups (e.g. Montana Assn. of Counties) to discuss land/water access issues and work in collaborative fashion. Council meets two to three times per year to identify common and specific problems, and possible solutions. MIAC prints and distributes the *Montana Access Guide to Federal and State Lands*.

**River Recreation Advisory Council**, formed in summer 2002 "for the purpose of assisting Montana FWP with the development of a statewide framework, policy and rules for managing recreation on Montana's rivers." Council consists of representatives from groups interested in river recreation management, and those who will be affected by river recreation management decisions.

**Agency Roundtable**, formed in 2002 by Montana FWP to convene state/federal agencies that have river recreation management responsibilities. Its purpose is to exchange information on river recreation management responsibility and jurisdiction, strategic planning processes, and rules governing recreation on rivers. Agency Roundtable provides an opportunity to learn more about other agencies' efforts to address increasing use and social conflict on rivers, and to identify opportunities to coordinate planning efforts and collaborate on projects.

**Interagency Recreational Fee Demonstration Program Coordination Task Force**, organized to facilitate interagency coordination of the federal Fee Demo Program.

*"Without the funding for access acquisition and development of public areas, the tourist, and Montanans, will not have access to the assets they came to see in the first place."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

Continue to use interagency groups and special task forces to gather and disseminate information, and develop collaborative strategies for access management and policies. Create additional partnerships between land management agencies, tribes, and private sector/non-profit interest groups to help resolve major access issues and suggest alternative approaches. Expand communication on access issues and cooperation between agencies, user groups, and other interested parties. Responsibility: MT Interagency Access Council, SA, FA, NPO, TR, Trb

#### Measures of Success for Objective B.2:

- ♦ Number of easements, exchanges or purchases consummated to preserve access
- ♦ Amount of expansion of Block Management Program acreage/participation, funding
- ♦ Number and nature of public access issues resolved between user groups/agencies

### **B.3 Objective: Develop an Enhanced Transportation System in Montana**

Montana's residents, visitors, and key industries are heavily dependent on transportation: personal, public, motor carrier, air and rail services. Research conducted for the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) found that tourism, and growth in Montana's visitor and service industries, will generate increased traffic throughout the State (motorized, rail, pedestrian, bicycle, pack animal, etc.), and increased demand for air travel.

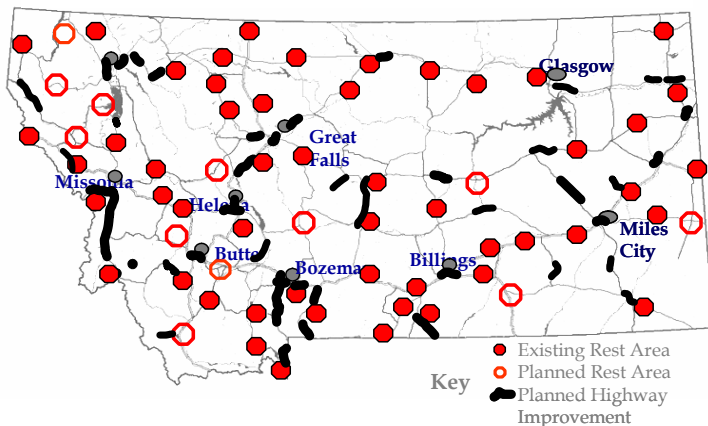
The principal transportation challenge for tourism and economic development in much of Montana is not lack of infrastructure, but the distance to be traveled. The Montana Department of Transportation and other state/federal agencies, transportation providers, communities, and tribes have developed strategic plans for multi-modal transportation systems. In many cases, though, planning and implementation of actions are impeded by lack of connectivity and communication between possible partners, an uninformed public, and funding deficiencies.

Montana's highway system connects communities and the state to national and international transportation systems. The roadway system is the largest single capital investment in Montana, and the needs of Montana's highways are increasing as a result of the state's growing population, tourism, and pass-thru traffic.

MDT's multimodal transportation plan, *TranPlan 21*, identifies and



Fig. 5.1: Rest Areas & Highway Improvements



evaluates transportation issues facing Montana. According to the *TranPlan 21* annual report for 2001, Montana has a total of 69,556 miles of public roads; of which 55,682 are state-designated and 3,874 miles are federally-designated. The state highway system also contains over 4,600 bridges, each of which MDT inspects at least every two years for damage and deterioration. MDT has developed and implemented a Bridge Management System that is used to prioritize and coordinate bridge construction/maintenance projects with highway projects. In addition, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) identifies highway, rail, aeronautic, and transit improvements to preserve, renovate, and enhance Montana's transportation system. The September 2001 STIP, covering fiscal years 2002 through 2004, identified over 400 transportation projects statewide for MDT implementation.

Rest areas on interstate, primary and secondary roads are necessary in areas where private business cannot meet demand. Although the number of Montana's state rest areas is increasing, hours of operation and amenities need improvement, especially during the winter. According to ITRR research, less than half of Montana's winter visitors were satisfied with the availability of highway rest areas.

Montana's aviation industry serves an important role in ensuring statewide connectivity, both within and without. Air transportation within the state is highly dependent on consumer "supply" and "demand" levels of major national airlines. Nonresident tourists create demand for enhanced air service to and from Montana, which enhances service for Montana citizens and businesses. Montana also has a strong interest in the preservation of rail services. The rail system is a key element of the state's overall transportation system, and supports existing industry, including tourism. Seasonality of tourism in Montana decreases profitability and service of transportation carriers (airlines, passenger rail, car rental agencies, shuttle services, etc.). Strategic tourism planning and marketing efforts will help to preserve and enhance existing transportation service levels.

The graying of America will increase the importance of transit/shuttle transportation to meet the needs of both Montanans and nonresidents. Visitors will require more options for mechanized modes of travel within and to urban/rural areas and attractions (national parks, golf courses, historic sites, shopping, medical services, etc.). Scheduled bus service is available in some of Montana's urban areas (Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Butte and Kalispell) but not in Helena, Bozeman or most rural areas. A number of communities provide door-to-door bus or van service (e.g., Call-A-Ride or elderly/disabled transit services). Taxi service is limited only to a few urban areas.

### ***TranPlan 21***

The Department of Transportation statewide multimodal transportation plan, *TranPlan 21*, has identified current and future issues/concerns, and established MDT policy goals and actions since 1995. Annual *TranPlan 21* reports track implementation of policy goals, actions and system features. Biennial analysis monitors changes, assisted by public and stakeholder input, establishing need for amendments and revisions. A majority of goals and actions have been completed and those remaining are being implemented.

Source: MDT

### **MDT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**

STIP identifies highway, rail, aeronautic and transit improvements to Montana's transportation systems. Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) funding assists with accomplishment of STIP objectives.

**Nonresident tourists create demand for enhanced air service to and from Montana, which improves service for Montana citizens and businesses.**



Montana has 5,048 miles of state and federal highways

Trails are a significant tourism and recreation asset in Montana, whether they are backcountry hiking/horse trails, OHV trails, groomed cross-country ski or snowmobile trails, or urban and rural bicycle/pedestrian trails. Conscientious planning and expansion of Montana trail systems can improve the economic vitality and quality of life for Montana's communities and residents. An improved urban and rural trail system provides additional soft adventure recreation activities to residents and visitors alike. Tour companies and recreation-related businesses benefit from increased bookings of bicycle/walking tours. Trails in wilderness and primitive backcountry areas offer access to adventure recreation opportunities (backpacking, big game hunting, high country fishing, horse/mule/llama pack trips, etc).

Improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities are needed for commuting, transportation, recreation and the preservation of environmental quality. MDT's State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator is responsible for addressing non-motorized transportation considerations, including planning and technical assistance, and coordination of available funds for bicycle and pedestrian improvements. MDT publishes *Bicycle the Big Sky*, a visitor guide of bicycle-related maps. Partnerships are being developed between MDT, Dept. of Commerce, tourism regions, and the private sector to maintain bicycle-related tourism guides and information.

According to the State Trails Plan, maintaining the current trail system in Montana, and planning for expansion, is one of the biggest challenges facing trail users and land management agencies. Government funding for maintaining the current network of trails is insufficient.

*Action B.3.1: Advance Implementation of Montana's Rest Area Strategy*

Use strategies contained in MDT's TranPlan 21 Update and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to improve rest areas. Complete new rest area projects with design improvements and visitor services, including visitor information (see Action B.4.1). Address seasonality and extend hours of operation at key rest areas needed to serve tourists. Develop partnerships and funding opportunities with private/nonprofit sectors to assist with seasonal maintenance and staffing needs. Responsibility: MDT, DOC, TR, CC, VIC, NPO

*Action B.3.2: Continue to Improve Roads & Bridges; Address Maintenance Backlog*

Advocate for funding and implementation of Montana Department of Transportation highway and bridge improvement actions identified in TranPlan 21 Update and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Expand local input into decision-making on road improvements which will enhance or affect natural, historic, cultural and community assets. Additionally, expand



partnerships and funding opportunities between agencies and the private/nonprofit sectors to address the backlog of maintenance on transportation infrastructure. Responsibility: MDT, SA, FA, MACo, MLCT

*Action B.3.3: Work with Air Carriers/Airports to Identify Needs & Enhance Air Service*

Continue Montana's statewide aviation planning process by encouraging tourism stakeholders to participate in air service task force groups, and to remain actively involved in meetings with airlines regarding frequency and scheduling of flights. Where possible, address needs of airlines to enhance service. Identify airport improvements and aviation strategies that will support or enhance tourism. Responsibility: MDT, DOC, TR, CVB, Biz

*Action B.3.4: Advocate for Passenger Rail Service*

Build relationships and coordination efforts with Amtrak, Burlington Northern and independent short lines. Advocate to state/federal agencies and elected officials for support of passenger rail service. Work with tour operators, tourism businesses, MDT and other state/federal agencies to promote increased use of passenger rail service through packaging, rail/drive/bus tours, etc. Responsibility: DOC, TAC, TR, CVB, Biz, MDT

*Action B.3.5: Work with Car Rental Agencies to Identify Needs & Enhance Services*

Create partnerships with automobile rental agencies to identify and address service needs, and to package car rental with lodging, attractions, activities and events, especially during shoulder seasons. Responsibility: TR, CVB, CC, Biz

*Action B.3.6: Identify Opportunities for Transit/Shuttle Transportation at Major Destinations*

Work with cities, counties and attractions to identify and seek funding for transit/shuttle transportation to meet the needs of travelers, and to reduce impact from personal vehicle traffic in high visitation areas. Explore opportunities to utilize federal transportation grant funds. Responsibility: MDT, TR, CC, NPS, Attn, Biz, MLCT, MACo

*Action B.3.7: Enhance Montana's Trail System*

Form partnerships between local governments, agencies, tribes, private landowners, non-profit/for-profit user groups, tourism businesses, and others to continue planning, seek funding sources, and address management of Montana's trail system. Use the State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) to facilitate communication and action between partners. Integrate Montana's trail system with the state's



Passenger and freight rail services are important to Montana's economy.

*"An efficient shuttle bus system that links Glacier NP and gateway communities would reduce congestion, improve transportation options and provide opportunities for positive resident/visitor interaction."*

- Online Survey Participant



Trolleys & shuttles provide alternative tourist transportation.

*"Visitors will spend more quality time in gateway communities if they are pedestrian friendly. Walkable downtowns, river-walk trails and bike paths should be developed and promoted as part of the Montana experience."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan



Hiking near Dupuyer

primary transportation network and, where appropriate, provide alternatives to vehicular transportation, according to guidelines in the 2001 Montana State Trails Plan and TranPlan 21 Update.

Improve trail maintenance, and retain or expand existing trails (where appropriate) in order to maintain recreation opportunities and diffuse user demand, thereby reducing impacts from concentrated trail use. Work to prevent trail closures, which have a negative impact on surrounding communities and tourism businesses. Partner with MDT and other agencies to improve bike and pedestrian facilities in urban and rural areas. Combine bicycle/pedestrian related improvements with byway activities for increased opportunities for partnerships and federal funding.

Responsibility: MDT, MTRI, STAC, NPO, LG, Trb, Biz, LO

#### Measures of Success for Objective B.3:

- ◆ Number of completed projects/actions in MDT TranPlan 21 and STIP
- ◆ Number of enhancements to commercial air service and airports
- ◆ Continuation/expansion of passenger rail service
- ◆ Enhancements to car rental/transit/shuttle transportation services
- ◆ Augmentation/improvement of Montana's trail inventory
- ◆ Increases in number of miles and condition of bike/pedestrian and backcountry trails

## B.4 Objective: Create a Comprehensive & Interactive “System” of Visitor Information & Interpretation

Montana’s current system of visitor information is three-fold: information for vacation planning, information for vacation orientation within Montana, and information for on-site interpretation and entertainment.

**PLANNING.** The Department of Commerce Promotion Division (Travel Montana) provides high-quality vacation planning guides and brochures, web sites and telephone travel counselors (800#) that receive high ratings from travelers. Additionally, tourism regions, CVBs, chambers, agencies and businesses provide trip planning materials. State and regional tourism marketers provide information to auto club guidebooks (e.g., AAA) and to travel media for articles/features about Montana. Travelers’ friends and relatives also are a major source of information for vacation planning.

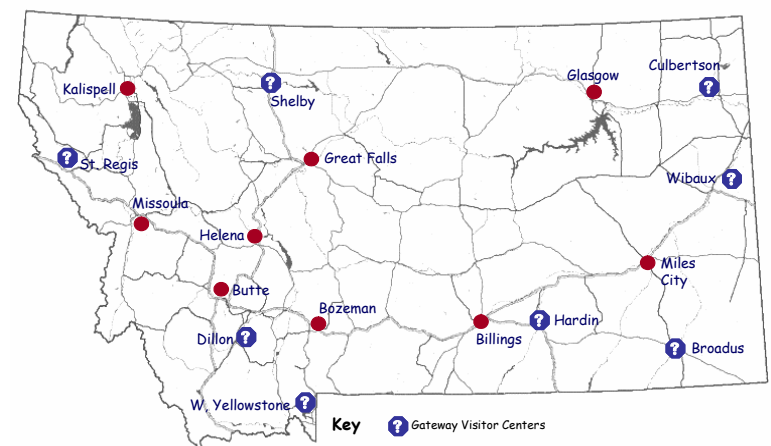
**ORIENTATION.** Information for traveler orientation within Montana includes highway signs, visitor information centers (VICs), brochure racks, billboards, front-line service persons, travel guides/books, maps, and travelers’ friends and relatives.

In 2000-2001, 80%+ of nonresident travelers expressed satisfaction with Montana’s directional signage. About one-third felt that signage had improved since their last visit. Several of Montana’s tourism regions, communities and tribes promote driving/loop tours; however, there is no state standard for tour route signage.

Nearly two-thirds of 2000-2001 nonresident visitors also were satisfied with the availability of other travel information. About one-third felt that availability had improved (except in winter). The Montana Department of Commerce funds eight “gateway” visitor information centers (VICs) around the state, which generally are open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. These centers are located at Broadus, Culbertson, Dillon, Hardin, Shelby, St. Regis, West Yellowstone and Wibaux (Figure 5.2). Brochure racks are maintained by chambers and commercial display companies at airports, rail stations, hotels, restaurants, convenience store/gas stations, etc.

**ON-SITE INTERPRETATION.** On-site interpretation and entertainment includes historical markers, interpretive signs, brochures (e.g., self-guided walking/driving tours), maps, guided tours (with human interpreter, cassette

Fig. 5.2: State-Funded Gateway VICs



tapes, etc.), interactive displays, reenactments, and travelers' friends and relatives. A statewide Lewis & Clark Interpretive Sign Strategy was developed by the Montana Tourism & Recreation Initiative (MTRI) inter-agency group in preparation for the Bicentennial in 2003-2007. Many of the interpretive sites and signs identified in the strategy have been funded, improved and installed. Other types of on-site interpretation and information are provided by Montana communities, businesses and nonprofit organizations, aided by the Montana Historical Society for technical assistance. Other than the Lewis & Clark sign strategy, there are no standardized guidelines for design or content of interpretive/informational signs that are not state-funded.

*Action B.4.1: Enhance State Rest Areas & VICs with Montana Highlights*

Continue to implement MDT's Statewide Rest Area Plan provisions for visitor communication in rest areas by installing brochure racks, information bulletin boards, and displays of local/regional attractions and amenities at all state rest areas as they are constructed or upgraded. Establish policies and plans for display and brochure rack installation and maintenance. Contract local/regional organizations (chambers of commerce, tourism regions, or commercial brochure display firms) to voluntarily maintain displays with current information. Consider feasibility of locating VICs at additional rest area locations (especially inbound direction gateways) to lure visitors to area businesses and attractions.

Use Montana's VICs, rest areas and chambers of commerce to showcase Montana's history and economy. Highlight Montana products in materials, furnishings and displays sponsored by business and industry groups (e.g., log furniture, copper accents, western art, product samples), such as products from Made-in-Montana and Grown-in-Montana. Pursue state legislative action if needed for policy changes.

Expand VIC and rest area hours/seasons through development of partnerships with local businesses, nonprofit/service organizations and agencies.

Responsibility: MDT, DOC, DOAg, TR, CVB, VIC, CC, Biz, Leg, FWP

*Action B.4.2: Educate Visitors about Ethics and Responsibilities on Public & Private Lands*

Develop a concise brochure and public relations program to educate both Montanans and nonresident visitors about their responsibilities associated with use of public and private lands. The information should include a number to report violations and list penalties where appropriate. Distribute the brochure at VICs, rest areas, public agency offices, businesses and with fishing/hunting license or other public land use applications. Responsibility: MTRI, NPO, FWP



Lost Trail Pass Rest Area

Montana travelers have access to 59 rest areas (13 are located in city parks).

#### Action B.4.3: Complete Implementation of Statewide Lewis & Clark Interpretive Sign Strategy

Continue to encourage communities to implement the sign strategy for the Bicentennial, which provides a unified structure, style and look for interpretive signs along the Lewis and Clark Trail, while encouraging creativity appropriate to each site and story. Responsibility: MLCBC, MHS, DOC, MDT, FWP

#### Action B.4.4: Provide Professionally-Researched Interpretive Programs & Facilities for Visitors

Create partnerships and combine resources to produce professional, accurate interpretive programs, tapes, signage, etc., for guided/self-guided tours. Responsibility: MHS, FA, Trb, Univ, FWP

#### Measures of Success for Objective B.4:

- ♦ Enhancements completed at Montana rest areas and VICs
- ♦ Development of public relations program on ethics and responsibilities
- ♦ Completion of L&C Interpretive Sign Strategy
- ♦ Number and quality of interpretive programs produced at local and state facilities



Lewis & Clark Interpretive  
Center, Great Falls

### **B.5 Objective: Improve Statewide System of Highway Signs**

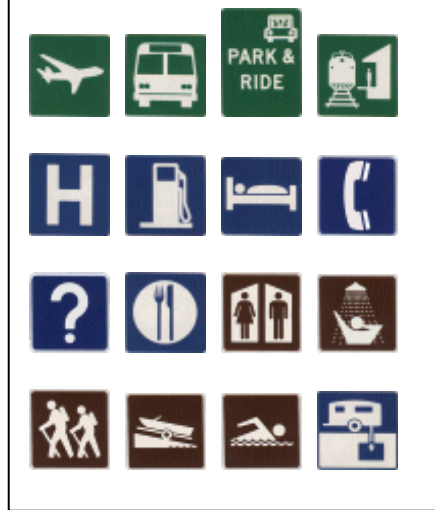
The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) installs and maintains directional signage on all of Montana's federal and state highways, working in cooperation with other state, federal and local agencies. Federal guidelines direct the type, number and uses of signs on federal Interstate highways, and MDT has authority to interpret and implement federal and state guidelines according to state policy. Often, MDT staff are placed in the awkward position of deciding where signs are needed, where they are not, or which local/regional attractions or businesses deserve highway signs, and which do not. This is not an ideal situation for MDT highway staff, or for tourism and recreation providers/marketers. Representatives from MDT and Dept. of Commerce have discussed guidelines and policies related to highway signs.

#### Action B.5.1: Develop/Implement Sign Guidelines for Services, Attractions & Businesses

Complete sign guidelines handbook by the end of 2003. Include a summary of federal and state laws and rationale related to highway sign and billboard regulations (e.g., laws/limitations, safety, sign clutter, priorities, etc.). Provide guidance about the types of services and attractions most important to visitors, about symbol signs (see Action B.5.2), and about how to establish local/regional sign programs



Fig. 5.3: Symbol Signs



that create a “hierarchy of signs” which guide visitors to desired locations. Establish in the guidelines a process for deciding sign topics at the local level (most important attractions/services decided by tourism region recommendation to county commissioners or city council, etc.). Create statewide design standards for continuity in tourist corridor signs (loop tours, byways, cultural corridors, etc.).

Assist businesses with guidelines for effective sign design in a section addressing opportunities/limitations, guidelines and costs for businesses to place signs (Adopt-A-Highway, etc.) or billboards on state highways, or participate in visitor services signs (Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs, or TODS).

Invite stakeholder groups to participate in the process to complete a user-friendly sign guidelines/policy handbook, in order to improve Montana’s system of signs and reduce conflicts between MDT and local communities and businesses. Distribute the handbook through tourism, government and business organizations. Responsibility: MDT, DOC, TR, MACo, MLCT, Biz, MHS, BTA, MTTA, Trb

Action B.5.2: Encourage Statewide Adoption of Visitor-Friendly Symbol Signs

Encourage Montana attractions, agencies and businesses to adopt and use symbol signs which provide consistent directional and orientation sign icons/graphics for visitors (Figure 5.3). Work with MDT to ensure consistency of sign symbols, and compliance with federal and state guidelines and policy. Responsibility: MDT, DOC, TR, Biz

Action B.5.3: Address Appropriate Use/Placement of Billboards While Maintaining Landscapes

Work with billboard companies to mitigate negative impacts of billboards, while still providing advertising opportunities for businesses and useful information for travelers (up to 20% of Montana’s nonresident visitors indicated that highway billboards were useful). Address controversial issues related to billboards (size, placement, design, sign clutter, views), and educate businesses about federal/state/local laws regulating billboards. Enhance traveler safety and landscape aesthetics by educating businesses about effective use of colors, graphics, text font and amount of text. Additionally, consider alternatives to billboards where possible/practical, and encourage businesses to use alternative methods of advertising. Responsibility: TR, MDT, Biz, MACo, MLCT

Measures of Success for Objective B.5:

- ◆ Distribution of sign guidelines/policy handbook by 2004
- ◆ Policy adoption of symbol signs, and widespread use of them
- ◆ Increased participation in TODS
- ◆ Consistent use of directional and orientation signing
- ◆ Reduction of controversies surrounding billboards



## B.6 Objective: Assist Communities to Enhance Facilities/Services for Tourism Development while Respecting Community Values, Heritage & Character

Many Montana communities and rural areas are coping with rapid growth, including an ever-growing number of tourists, while others are de-populating. Montanans who participated in the strategic planning process expressed feelings of strong attachment to their state's landscape and cultural heritage, and to the character of their towns. They want a healthy economy, but not at the expense of their natural surroundings, culture, or community.

While some communities desire more tourism overall, other communities or areas may decide to "de-market" certain seasons or visitor segments to reduce local impacts. De-marketing can target growth/visitation in general, or a certain sector/group in particular (e.g., fishermen), on either a temporary or permanent basis.

The Montana Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) helps analyze local resident attitudes about (and interest in) tourism, measure tourism potential, identify gaps in visitor services and suggest projects or actions that can strengthen the role of tourism in the local economy. CTAP is funded by the state lodging tax and administered by the Department of Commerce. At the end of the 8-month process, communities can use grant funds to develop priority projects. From 1991 to 2001, CTAP assisted 27 Montana communities.

The Tourism Infrastructure Improvement Program (TIIP) is funded by the state lodging tax and administered by the Department of Commerce. Since 1995, TIIP grants have provided more than \$1.5 million in funds for 31 projects in 26 communities across the state.

The Special Events Grant Program (SEGP), administrated by the Department of Commerce Promotion Division, assists economic development and tourism through grant funding for the creation of an event or to make an event more successful. The types of projects eligible include attendance events, enrichment activities and promotional events.

The National Main Street program provides assistance to downtown districts or subdistricts seeking economic revitalization and infrastructure improvements. More than 1,600 communities belong to the National Main Street program ([www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)), including several in Montana, using its Four-Point Approach™ to address business retention and recruitment, downtown design, marketing and organizational development.

Attracting tourists and visitors - especially heritage/cultural travelers - is an important economic development strategy for many downtowns.

National Main Street News, June 2002

*"Infrastructure needs to include park facilities and staffing, land base for park development and historic and recreational asset maintenance."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

*"Many local park systems serve as tourism sites for stopovers between major sites. In some cases local parks and amenities may be a destination. Certainly events sponsored at major city parks have as many non-residents as residents participating or visiting."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

*"Building the tourism infrastructure is extremely important to the tribes. The tribes have a lot to offer; however, they lack the funding, training and facilities to participate in tourism efforts."*

- Online Survey Comment

Action B.6.1: Continue and Enhance Community Tourism Assessment (CTAP) & Tourism Infrastructure Improvement (TIIP) Programs

Assist at least three communities each year to assess their tourism and recreation potential through the Community Tourism Assessment Program. Provide tourism infrastructure improvement funds through the Tourism Infrastructure Improvement Program. Responsibility: DOC, LG, Ext, ITRR

Action B.6.2: Encourage Review of City/County/Tribal Infrastructure & Public Services

Conduct workshops and discussions to develop an inventory of local tourism-related infrastructure, facilities and public services which provide safe and quality visitor experiences. Focus on recreation (sports venues, event centers, fairgrounds), arts, cultural, historic and interpretive facilities/services, VICs, EMS/medical/fire, law enforcement, utilities (water/sewer, waste, power, telecom), transportation (capacity, parking, traffic control, transit options), information/interpretation, and facility reconstruction to meet accessibility and safety standards. Form alliances of communities, tribes, agencies, private citizens, businesses, private/nonprofit groups to utilize cooperative funding strategies and strategic planning partnerships. Identify top priority needs and seek funding to address them (see Appendix C). Contribute appropriate inventory items to statewide tourism asset database (Action A.7.5). Responsibility: LG, Trb, MLCT, MACO, TR, NPO, Biz

Action B.6.3: Enhance Heritage/Cultural Facilities & Attractions to Meet Visitor Needs

Work with heritage and cultural facilities to provide information about visitor trends, the tastes and preferences of targeted market segments, and ways that managers can refine the niche and quality of their facilities, services and events to better serve both residents and nonresidents. Include information about ways to cost-effectively develop creative, interactive and age-appropriate displays and activities, and to generate revenue from tourists. Utilize research on traveler habits to support decision making.

Develop greater visibility of, and connections between, heritage and cultural assets (museums, galleries, historic/cultural sites, theater, music, events, reenactments), so that visitors can more easily access them through tourist packages, cultural tours, etc.

Expand hours and seasons (weekends, year-round) at historical and cultural attractions. Form partnerships to assist with expenses and recruit additional workers as needed (i.e. high school student interns, Boy/Girl Scouts, FFA, 4-H, retirees). Work with hotels and meeting planners to host meeting and conference events at cultural venues. Responsibility: MHS, MAC, Trb, NPO, Biz, FWP

Action B.6.4: Encourage Community Participation in the National Main Street Program

Assist communities in learning about the National Main Street (NMS) program, and applying its principles to Downtown Revitalization efforts. Obtain NMS materials and resources for community leaders to address economic restructuring (market analysis, business retention and recruitment), building façade renovation, streetscape enhancements, marketing and promotion and organizational issues. Evaluate the feasibility of creating a Montana Main Street Program under the Department of Commerce or Montana League of Cities & Towns. Responsibility: DOC, MLCT, MEDA, MHS

Action B.6.5: Encourage Communities to Use Strategic Planning & Development Tools

Provide information to communities about planning and development tools that will enhance local quality of life, as well as preserve community heritage and character. Encourage communities to adopt the Uniform Code for Building Conservation (UCBC) to assist owners of historic buildings in redeveloping them without having to meet all requirements of the Uniform Building Code for new construction. Educate community leaders about uses of the Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings (UCADB), which allows cities to address hazardous structures. Sponsor workshops on SmartGrowth principles, historic districts, affordable housing and other tools that will aid in preserving local quality of life while dealing with growth and development issues. Responsibility: MLCT, MACo, DOC, MEDA

*"Somewhere in this document as a goal, it should be talked about working with zoning and planning to keep the "individual character" of an area, and also to keep open space and agriculture - which are the attractants for tourists."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

Measures of Success for Objective B.6:

- ♦ Number of communities who participate in CTAP and TIIP programs
- ♦ Number/attendance of workshops conducted for city/county/tribal entities regarding facility/service needs to support tourism
- ♦ Community improvements as a result of facility/infrastructure projects
- ♦ Enhancements to heritage/cultural facilities and events to better meet visitor needs
- ♦ Expanded hours and services at heritage/cultural facilities and sites
- ♦ Number of communities participating in Main Street programs, and success of Downtown revitalization efforts
- ♦ Number of communities/counties using planning and development tools to address issues of growth, historic building redevelopment, hazardous buildings, etc.

## **C. Creating Teams**

- C.1 Link Agriculture with Tourism
- C.2 Create Partnerships to Address Asset Management Needs
- C.3 Increase Utilization of Business Assistance Programs
- C.4 Identify Business Opportunities to Serve Visitors on Public Lands
- C.5 Enhance "Edu-Structure" to Support Tourism
- C.6 Build Funding Partnerships
- C.7 Develop Additional Funding Sources
- C.8 Facilitate Implementation of Strategic Plan

### **Montana visitors ate 110,000,000 meals in 2001, or 2.1 million/week. But how much was Montana Beef?**

Nonresident tourists spent more than \$332 million on restaurant meals and beverages, and another \$125+ million on groceries and snacks - not including meals consumed in the homes of friends and relatives.

A better mechanism is needed to link tourists - and the businesses that serve them - with Montana agricultural and ranching products.

## **C. Creating Teams**

In a world of limited funding and technical resources, partnerships are essential to accomplish tasks. This section outlines a series of objectives and actions designed to create partnerships that will leverage existing dollars to address the actions listed in the previous two sections. It also includes actions to facilitate enhanced collaboration between stakeholders, provide business assistance, and implement the Strategic Plan during the years 2003-2007.

### **C.1 Objective: Identify Opportunities to Link Agriculture with Tourism**

Tourists eat: in 2001, nonresident visitors in Montana ate approximately 110,000,000 meals - the equivalent of more than 2.1 million meals per week, or 300,000+ per day! They spent more than \$332 million on restaurant meals and beverages, and another \$125+ million on groceries and snacks, excluding meals consumed in the homes of friends and relatives. There are tremendous opportunities to better link Montana's agricultural products with its nonresident visitors, through restaurants and retailers. Currently, no formal statewide system exists to market Montana products to restaurants via brokers and suppliers. Thus, many opportunities to develop value-added products (and jobs) are missed, because raw materials (cattle, bushels of wheat, etc.) are shipped out of state for processing, packaging and sales. Funding for development of value-added ag products is available from USDA through the 2002 Farm Bill (see Appendix C). State programs like the Department of Agriculture's Farmers Market listing and Grown In Montana (GIM) exist to market products for retail sales, but they do not address opportunities to create broker/wholesaler mechanisms to supply restaurants. Additionally, there are opportunities to better educate tourists about Montana's agriculture and ranching industries through tours, interpretation and information dissemination.

#### *Action C.1.1: Create Mechanisms for Tourism Businesses to Use Montana Agricultural Products*

Identify opportunities to create brokered/wholesale purchase and distribution of ag products, based on analyses of current restaurant suppliers and buying trends. Work with groups of producers to develop products specifically for Montana restaurants, and create branded items ("Montana Beef") to add value to the products in the eyes of visitors. Responsibility: DOAg, BTA, TR, CC, Biz

### Action C.1.2: Enhance Existing Programs with Focus on Tourist Markets

Link promotion of Farmers' Markets, Made-In-Montana/Grown In Montana programs to tourism promotion. Provide information in state and regional travel guides and web sites, and at VICs. Encourage producers to become active in local and regional tourism organizations, and network with tourism businesses to buy and/or promote their products. Responsibility: DOAg, DOC, NPO, Biz, TR



### Action C.1.3: Develop Cooperative Marketing Campaigns between Agriculture & Tourism

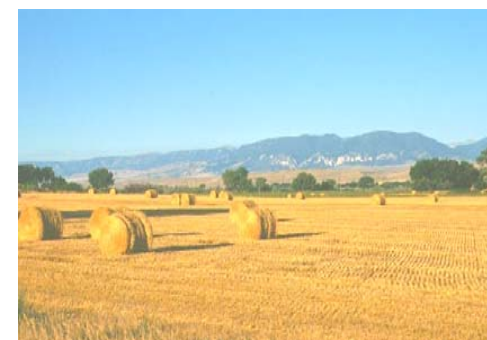
Form marketing/advertising partnerships between agriculture and tourism in strategic target markets (similar to Napa Valley Winegrowers', or Florida Citrus Growers' partnerships with state and regional tourism promotion). Identify mutually-beneficial images/themes (western heritage/Montana beef, Big Sky Country/mountains/Montana water or malted barley). Work with agricultural marketing groups to create campaigns and leverage advertising dollars. Responsibility: DOC, DOAg, Ad, BTA, Biz

### Action C.1.4: Educate Visitors about Montana Agriculture & Ranching

Expand ways to educate visitors about Montana agricultural and ranching products. Distribute brochures at VICs and hotels, promote farm/ranch tours or stays, place signs in fields identifying crops, tree species or breeds of animals, and conduct trade/technical tours for business groups, such as meetings and conventions, university researchers, etc. Work with farmers/ranchers to provide unique venues for meeting/convention events (receptions, barn dances, etc.). Responsibility: DOAg, TR, CVB, NPO, Biz

### Measures of Success for Objective C.1:

- ♦ New mechanisms created to link ag products with restaurants and retailers
- ♦ Existing promotions expanded to target visitors
- ♦ Number and reach of cooperative advertising campaigns between ag and tourism
- ♦ Educational programs/tours created for visitors



Farm land near Bridger, MT

## **C.2 Objective: Create Partnerships to Address Asset Management Needs**

Maintenance and operating costs to manage natural, historic and cultural assets continue to rise. Varying (and often conflicting) opinions exist about how - and to what extent - assets should be managed. Public-private-nonprofit-tribal partnerships will become increasingly important to addressing issues related to funding and management. To build partnerships and teams requires public input, stakeholder involvement, consensus-building

*"Tourism is the only growing industry in the state - we should not forget how this phenomenon has occurred as we proceed in the next five years. The success is due to the unique public/private partnership we have in place."*

- Online Survey Participant

*"The tourism industry, public-land managers, gateway communities and conservationists should develop partnerships which have the primary purpose of improving stewardship of the natural assets that is our greatest attraction...the emphasis for the partnership is stewardship rather than promotion. Visitors will be more impressed with partnerships aimed at stewardship of the resource than partnership aimed at getting their money."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

and conflict resolution. Efforts by stakeholders to identify common goals, seek solutions and take action can result in tremendous success.

Action C.2.1: Identify Opportunities for Partnerships & Funding to Address Asset Needs

Create and prioritize a list of needs that might be addressed by partnership projects and additional funding. Identify potential partners, roles, resources and tasks. Design partnership agreements to accomplish common goals and address needs. Expand membership of MTRI working group to include Dept. of Agriculture, DOR and BIA. Seek funding sources and advocate for additional funding to address asset needs. Responsibility: MTRI, SA, FA, NPO, TR, Biz, Trb

Action C.2.2: Evaluate Agency Regulations & Policies to Determine Differences in Priorities/Programs

Identify conflicting regulations or policies that create obstacles to partnerships. Work to resolve policy and program differences to better facilitate inter-agency partnerships. Responsibility: MTRI

Action C.2.3: Encourage Citizens to Volunteer for Asset Maintenance Projects

Expand programs that encourage citizen volunteers to assist with asset maintenance projects, such as trail reconstruction, clean-up, building picnic shelters, etc. Extend successful prototypes like "Adopt-A-Trail" to other facility needs ("Adopt-A-Campground, or Park, or Boat Ramp", "Adopt-A-Museum"). Use integrated teams of various user groups for establishing a sense of commonality among recreationists with different interests, as recommended by the State Trails Plan. Recruit volunteers from existing community organizations (Girl/Boy Scouts, families, church and community groups), or form specific "Friends of..." groups for particular sites/facilities. Responsibility: SA, FA, NPO, Trb

Measures of Success for Objective C.2:

- ◆ Number of opportunities identified and partnerships formed
- ◆ Number of regulatory or policy issues resolved (obstacles overcome)
- ◆ Number of volunteer projects undertaken, or sites adopted
- ◆ Number of volunteers (or volunteer hours) and value of time committed

### C.3 Objective: Increase Awareness & Utilization of Business Assistance Programs among Tourism & Recreation Businesses

Many assistance programs exist to aid business owners and managers, from seminars and workshops to low-interest loan pools and workforce training funds. However, many tourism businesses are not aware of these programs, and often, the programs tend to target businesses in other sectors, such as manufacturing or high-tech. It is important to inform tourism and recreation businesses about the availability of these programs, and to encourage program managers to become familiar with tourism trends and issues. The “front line” of business assistance is the network of ten Small Business Development Centers (SBDC’s) and twelve Microbusiness Development Corporations (MBDC’s) across the state (see sidebar). MBDC’s are certified to administer revolving loan funds, lending directly to businesses. The Department of Commerce also offers business, micro-business, finance and technical assistance. The Microbusiness Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) hosts monthly one-hour business roundtable discussions via audio-conference. Local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce also offer business assistance, as do local chapters of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). Ensuring that tourism and recreation businesses are aware of the resources available to them will strengthen the tourism industry.

#### Action C.3.1: Provide Information about Business Assistance to Tourism & Recreation Businesses

Inform businesses about assistance programs through Department of Commerce newsletters, a statewide tourism listserv, regional tourism meetings, press releases and business trade associations. Responsibility: DOC, TR, BTA, MTTA

#### Action C.3.2: Offer Entrepreneurship & Management Training for Tourism & Recreation Businesses

Provide training for business owners and managers, such as the NxLevel course, marketing workshops and classes in financial management and labor issues, which are tailored to tourism and recreation industry issues and needs. Responsibility: DOC, SBDC, TR, Biz

#### Action C.3.3: Address Workforce Issues & Training Programs

Inform businesses about workforce training funds and incentives that are available for new or expanding businesses, or for retraining of dislocated workers. Identify ways to address challenges of workforce availability in shoulder seasons (college students returning to school before Labor Day), particularly in resort areas, as tourism promotion increases off-peak visitation. Responsibility: DLI, TR

*"I feel that it would improve services offered if there were more programs for the recreation industry."*

- Online Survey Participant

#### Montana Small Business Development Center (SBDC) locations:

- ♦ Billings
- ♦ Bozeman
- ♦ Butte
- ♦ Colstrip
- ♦ Great Falls
- ♦ Havre
- ♦ Helena
- ♦ Kalispell
- ♦ Missoula
- ♦ Wolf Point

#### Montana Microbusiness Development Corporation (MBDC) locations (all of the above, plus the following):

- ♦ Lewistown
- ♦ Glendive

Source: Dept. of Commerce

*"We need more information about Generation X so we can plan and manage our emerging workforce successfully. Do not believe in more handouts from the government to offset reality costs of being in business. Need to provide opportunities for additional learning and training but not at taxpayer expense."*

- Online Survey Participant



Tourism is an industry that exists around the premise of service. It is an industry created to satisfy people.

- Travel & Tourism Research Assn. (TTRA), *Customer Relationship Management in Tourism*

*"Twenty businesses with five employees are just as important as that one business with 100 employees. Foster small business development for those that truly live and love Montana."*

- Online Survey Participant

*"Whenever possible we need to engage the private sector instead of just adding more bureaucracy."*

- Online Survey Participant

Partnerships between the Forest Service and non-governmental organizations are a valuable program component and are also a focus of criticism from those who fear over-commercialization or undue influences on agency decisions.

- USFS Executive Summary, Issues & Concerns Related to Fee Demo Program

#### Action C.3.4: Encourage Financial Lending to Provide Capital for Tourism & Recreation Businesses

Make information available to businesses and potential businesses about lending programs available through state and local entities (MicroBusiness Finance Program, USDA Rural Development, SBA, low-interest loan pools, revolving loan funds, etc.). Encourage commercial lenders to use Community Reinvestment Act obligations to contribute to loan pools, or to support tourism and recreation business development. Responsibility: DOC, SBDC, MEDA

#### Measures of Success for Objective C.3:

- ◆ Number of tourism/recreation businesses who utilize assistance programs
- ◆ Number of training courses offered, and participation levels
- ◆ Workforce training funds used by tourism/recreation businesses
- ◆ Solutions identified for labor challenges during off-peak seasons
- ◆ Amount of lending to tourism/recreation businesses, and default rates over time

### **C.4 Objective: Identify Business Opportunities to Serve Visitors on Public Lands**

National tourism and recreation trends indicate that visitors have increasing expectations of services, interpretation and transportation on public lands. The need for enhanced services, and for low-impact recreational activities, present opportunities for businesses to partner with land management agencies and provide services that agencies are not well-suited to offer. Examples include guided recreational activities (trail rides, hiking, biking, 4-wheel tours, rafting), group tours and transportation (snow coaches, interpretive bus or boat tours), and specialized theme trips (culture, geology, photography, history, painting). Additionally, services and amenities can be provided by businesses that are difficult to offer by agencies, such as equipment rental, firewood, food and beverage, or retail concessions, etc.

#### Action C.4.1: Identify Opportunities for New or Enhanced Tourism/Recreation Services

Evaluate opportunities for value-added services on public lands to enhance visitor experiences, and provide controlled, low-impact recreation (e.g., guided adventures, interpretive/eco-tours, etc.). Seek businesses to offer high-quality retail services to visitors, such as equipment rental, food and beverage, firewood, campground concessions, etc. Solicit proposals from businesses to provide services to visitors. Responsibility: SA, FA, Biz

#### Action C.4.2: Discuss Ways to Simplify Regulations & Permitting Processes While Protecting Assets

Reduce obstacles to value-added services provided by businesses by coordinating and simplifying regulations and permitting processes between agencies, while still retaining requirements that protect natural/historic/cultural assets. Obtain input from businesses and other stakeholder groups about changes. Responsibility: SA, FA, NPO, BTA, Biz

Action C.4.3: Investigate Contracting of Maintenance Operations to Private Businesses

Evaluate feasibility and cost-effectiveness of contracting for public facility maintenance to private businesses. Responsibility: SA, FA

Measures of Success for Objective C.4:

- ♦ Number of new tourism/recreation services offered to visitors
- ♦ Simplification of regulations/permitting processes to facilitate services
- ♦ Maintenance contract opportunities offered to businesses

## C.5 Objective: Enhance Montana's "Edu-Structure" to Support Tourism

Education and training are critical components in the success of any industry or organization. Tourism and recreation are no exception. Professional development, workforce training, career tracking, leadership development, awareness of challenges/trends and ongoing institutional support all are important to creating a "system" of professionalism and economic success. Success in tourism and recreation is based on customer service – one of the most difficult aspects of any business or agency. Good service is dependent on understanding the changing needs and expectations of customers – and being able to respond to those needs appropriately and cost-effectively. ITRR nonresident visitor research in 2001 indicated that tourists were extremely satisfied with the hospitality and service they received in Montana. This is due in part to the Superhost! hospitality training and other educational programs that have helped to build service skills in the tourism and recreation industry.

Action C.5.1: Expand Education Programs for Tourism & Recreation Careers Expand degree programs at all levels (associates, bachelors, masters) related to tourism and recreation, such as hotel/restaurant management, public facility/resource/recreation management, small business/entrepreneurship, tourism marketing, financial management for tourism and recreation, executive culinary programs, etc. Support the programs through student recruitment, internships, work studies and employment opportunities. Offer specialized workforce training through community

*"Commercial endeavors on public lands must not be to the detriment of resource values or compromise the public's ability to enjoy their lands."*

- Online Survey Participant



Montana State University, Bozeman



**Re. Tourism Extension Agents:**

*"There should be one in at least each 'Country'. Chamber of Commerce people burn out, tourism "boards" burn out - there should be a constant factor. In your entire draft, this would have my vote as the number one thing to accomplish. And then don't locate the agent in the larger communities!"*

- Comment on Draft Tourism Plan

colleges and distance learning. Expand secondary education programs (such as Teens in Tourism) to grow a pool of interested and informed potential employees in high schools. Enhance the Superhost! program to include advanced level training in communication skills, conflict resolution, team-building and supervisory skills. Responsibility: Univ, Ext, TAC, Biz

Action C.5.2: Develop a Staff Training Program for VICs

Create a VIC staff training program to include information about the VICs' role in Montana's tourism system, information services/displays, merchandising, reservations/booking services, volunteer recruitment/motivation/retention, volunteer management/reward/incentive systems, volunteer "employment" contracts and performance reviews, tracking inquiries/visitors, data management, facility management and maintenance, partnership development with private and nonprofit sectors, fam tours, tracking of visitor referrals from VICs, etc. Include options for testing and certification/rewards, based on increasingly higher levels of volunteer development. Responsibility: DOC, VIC, TR, CVB, CC

Action C.5.3: Provide Regional Familiarization Tours for State/Regional/Tribal/Local Tourism Staff

Plan and conduct regional "fam" tours for employees of VICs, tourism regions, Department of Commerce, call center, attractions, hotel "front-liners" and others who have marketing or customer contact responsibilities. Familiarize staff with their own regions, as well as other regions of the state (feature one or two regions each year in late spring, prior to peak season), as part of annual state VIC workshop. Responsibility: TR, DOC, VIC, Attn, Biz

Action C.5.4: Include Educational Presentations at Tourism & Recreation Meetings & Events

Plan for educational presentations at TAC, tourism region, CVB and MTRI meetings. Include topics such as tourism trends – needs and preferences of targeted visitors (Canadians, matures, international, heritage/cultural, business travelers, etc.), tourism research methods and uses, marketing, partnerships and public policy. Responsibility: TAC, TR, CVB, MTRI

Action C.5.5: Work with MSU to Create "Tourism Extension Agents" in Each Tourism Region

Create tourism specialists through the university extension system, placing one specialist in each tourism region. Focus efforts on rural communities and linkages between agriculture and tourism. Initially, fund the program through rural development grants. Responsibility: MSU, DOC, DOAg, TR

### Measures of Success for Objective C.5:

- ♦ Extent of university/college degree programs offered for tourism & recreation
- ♦ Adult education and distance learning programs offered
- ♦ Secondary education programs/curricula related to tourism & recreation
- ♦ Enhancements to Superhost!
- ♦ Development of staff training for VICs
- ♦ Number of fam tours offered for marketing/front-liner staff, participation levels
- ♦ Number and quality of educational programs offered at tourism/recreation meetings
- ♦ Creation of Tourism Extension Agents in each tourism region

## **C.6 Objective: Build Funding Partnerships to Leverage Existing Dollars**

The Montana lodging tax supports visitor facilities and projects of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Montana Historical Society, and the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission. Other state and federal funds also support recreation-related facilities, as well as infrastructure (roads, airports, parks, national forests, etc.). As resident and nonresident use of recreation facilities and services has increased, funding for those assets has remained stagnant or declined, so revenues are not keeping up with costs for maintenance and operation. Partnerships are a key to funding for public recreation facilities and services.

### Action C.6.1: Encourage Strategic Partnerships for Cooperative Project Funding

Leverage existing dollars for facility and service projects by forming strategic partnerships between organizations that can access funds from multiple sources (state, federal, foundations, corporate, etc.). Examples are the Traveler's Rest State Park, Pompeys Pillar and Western Montana Cultural Corridors projects, which included state, federal, local, private, nonprofit and tribal partners. Responsibility: SA, FA, TR, CVB, CC, Biz, NPO

### Action C.6.2: Identify Opportunities to Pool Public & Private Marketing Dollars

Coordinate local/regional businesses and attractions to pool a percentage of their *existing* marketing budgets to leverage lodging tax funds for higher impact promotions. Explore opportunities to partner between state and regional partners for targeted promotions, generate advertising revenue from state/regional web sites, etc. Responsibility: TR, CVB, Biz, DOC, Attn, Ad



Pompeys Pillar

*"...the success of much of this strategic plan will only be obtainable with very strong partnerships."*

- Public Comment on Draft Plan

*"Need to implement a sales tax so tourists pay their own way. Lift that burden off the Montana taxpayer."*

- Online survey respondent

### **Federal Fee Demo Program**

The Land & Water Conservation Fund Act (1965, 1972), authorized federal agencies to collect entrance, admission, and other fees. Beset by financial difficulties from rising levels of visitation and operating costs, and unfunded infrastructure repair, Congress passed the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program (HR 2107) in March 1996. Public Law 106-291 extended the program through Sept. 2004; with revenues available until Sept. 2007.

*The intent of the program is to test...fees that are reinvested in recreation areas on federal lands and used to maintain and improve natural resources, facilities and services.*

The Fee Demo Program allows the Dept. of the Interior (NPS, BLM, USFWS) and Dept. of Agricultural (USFS) to implement and test fees across the geographic and programmatic spectrum of sites that they manage. The participating agencies can retain all Fee Demo revenues, and at least 80% of the revenues at the collection sites to provide on-the-ground improvements at local recreation sites.

Source: DOI, USDA, Grant-Kohrs Study - J. Conner

*"Local park districts are able to form under MCA 7-16-2401-2443. However, a more specific tax district for local tourism would be equally if not more important."*

- Online Survey Participant

### Measures of Success for Objective C.6:

- ♦ Number of new partnerships formed
- ♦ Number of projects and dollars leveraged for cooperative projects
- ♦ Amount of pooled funding used for enhanced promotions
- ♦ Number of private and nonprofit partners involved in cooperative promotions

## **C.7 Objective: Develop Additional Funding Sources for Tourism & Recreation**

Lodging tax funds cannot be used to address all projects and needs related to tourism and recreation. The primary purpose of the lodging tax is for tourism promotion – to attract high-value, low impact visitors to and around Montana – in a very competitive national and international environment. But money also is needed for facilities and services that support tourism and recreation for both Montanans and visitors, such as parks, historical/cultural sites and facilities, search and rescue/EMS, etc. Declining state and federal budgets present challenges for facility and asset managers. Additional sources of funding are needed to address facility and service needs, so that promotion dollars are not hemorrhaged to the point of ineffectiveness.

Communities like Whitefish and West Yellowstone have very successful local option taxes to support services for both residents and visitors. Other states use recreation districts, auditorium districts and other special designations to support local recreation facilities and services. User fees like the federal fee demo program (see sidebar) have been effective in providing site-specific funds for maintenance and operation of recreation facilities and programs. Several studies have shown that visitors are willing to pay entrance and recreation fees to support high-quality facilities and services. Appendix C lists more than 50 resources that are available from state, federal and foundation sources for recreation, infrastructure, historic and cultural projects.

### Action C.7.1: Consider Selective &/or Local Option Taxes on Goods & Services Used by Tourists

Consider selective taxes on services used primarily by travelers, such as hotels, car rental, outfitted services, etc. Allow cities and counties to pass local option taxes, which target goods and services used by travelers to support local facilities and services for both residents and visitors.

Responsibility: Leg, MACo, MLCT, BTA, Biz

Action C.7.2: Evaluate Expansion of User Fees for Public Facility Recreation

Consider user fees, such as the federal fee demo program or state recreation fees, to supplement revenues for maintenance and operation of recreation sites and facilities. Focus on activities/users that currently do not pay fees through recreation vehicle licensing (e.g. activities such as hiking, mountain biking, float boating, cross-country skiing, tent camping, etc.). Work with the Interagency Recreational Fee Demonstration Program Coordination Task Force. Responsibility: SA, FA, NPO

Action C.7.3: Encourage Attractions to Generate more Revenue from Visitors

Help local attractions (museums, parks, etc.) develop revenue programs to support maintenance and operations, such as entrance fees, "friends" groups, corporate sponsors/donations, gift shops, education activities, VIP cards, etc. Include ways to address the needs of local residents, school groups, etc., so that they are able to access local facilities. Responsibility: MHS, FWP, MRPA, DOC, NPO, Biz

Action C.7.4: Develop Local/Regional Revenue-Sharing Visitor Packages

Create local/regional visitor packages, with a percent of the purchase price dedicated to support asset maintenance and operation needs. Promote the packages through state and regional promotions, web sites, businesses and tour brokers/agents. Responsibility: TR, CVB, DOC, Biz, Attn, NPO

Action C.7.5: Create a "Montana Visitor Passport" Program, with a Portion of Proceeds from Passport Sales used to Support Local/Regional Tourism Efforts

Develop a statewide passport program that visitors can purchase for admission to a variety of attractions and events statewide. Include in the price a dedicated percentage to support asset maintenance/operation needs. Promote the passports through Dept. of Commerce, tourism regions, agencies and businesses. Responsibility: MTRI, DOC, TR, Attn, NPO, Biz, Ad

Action C.7.6: Seek Additional Revenue for the Block Management Program

Enhance the amount of reimbursement for farmers and ranchers who agree to participate in the block management program, to help mitigate costs of impacts from allowing public access to private lands for hunting and fishing. Responsibility: FWP, LO, NPO

**Comments about User Fees**

**PRO:**

- "Fees are an important source of funds to provide quality recreation experiences and seem to be readily accepted when they provide direct support to and enhance the quality of the facilities being used."
- "The whole thing to me is about balance. We were asked to be "stewards" not "curators" of these lands and resources. ...I strongly support fees for use, limiting access where there needs to be limits and private sector use and development of appropriate types of tourism and other industry on more of Montana's lands."
- "I'm a firm believer in user fees but we have to be careful not to simply create new taxes. The federal fee demo program is starting to work ok & could be used as an example of how user fees can be dedicated to pay for maintenance & development of infrastructure."

**CON:**

- Recreation fees are likely to affect some visitors enough economically that they decide to recreate in non-fee areas. (USFS Exec. Summary, Fee Demo)
- "Be sure to have specific goals & objectives when thinking of fees and taxes. We want to encourage tourism not detour it."
- "The fee issue has a lot of concerns and downright opposition to it. There are some systemic questions that need to be addressed before we jump into fees."
- "No user fees for residents to support tourism!"

Source: Online Survey (except where noted)

*"Block Management needs lots more money to make it attractive to farmers and ranchers."*

- Online Survey Participant

*"Decision is the spark that ignites action. Until a decision is made, nothing happens."*  
- Wilfred A. Peterson

*"By working together, all of us can accomplish more. This is a critical piece to the whole puzzle of economic development in Montana. Each piece of that puzzle has to be willing to give a little in exchange for some of the take."*  
- Online Survey Participant

#### Measures of Success for Objective C.7:

- ♦ Amount of additional funding generated for asset maintenance & operations
- ♦ Success of selective/local option tax programs
- ♦ Success of user fee programs
- ♦ Number of revenue-generating programs implemented by attractions
- ♦ Number of revenue-sharing visitor packages developed, and funding generated
- ♦ Number of passports sold, and funding generated
- ♦ Amount of additional revenue generated for Block Management Program

### **C.8 Objective: Develop Partnerships to Facilitate Implementation of Strategic Plan**

Considerable time, effort and money was invested to create this Strategic Plan document. The Plan is intended to be page-worn, dog-eared and well-used by tourism and recreation stakeholders at all levels – not just by Department of Commerce and MTRI. It is designed to provide a blueprint for implementation – a roadmap to achieving the vision and goals defined by Montanans through public input during the planning process. Regional tourism organizations are slated to play a critical role in Plan implementation – requiring them to expand their mission and roles beyond that of just tourism promotion. The Plan will not be implemented unless all stakeholders take responsibility for their own participation – and form partnerships to accomplish the objectives and actions described in this chapter. Chapter 6 provides more detail about the implementation priorities, timeline and organizational needs. However, first the actions listed below must be addressed so that implementation can proceed.

#### Action C.8.1: Conduct Workshops in Each Region to Discuss Plan Implementation

Schedule implementation workshops during 2003 in each tourism region, with MTRI representatives, and other stakeholders, to discuss the actions, timeline and responsibilities included in the Plan, and roles of key stakeholder groups. Responsibility: TR, DOC, CVB, SA, FA, NPO, Biz

#### Action C.8.2: Conduct Training for Region/CVB Boards of Directors & Members

Help build the capacity of regional tourism organizations and CVBs to enable them to fill their critical role in the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Provide training in planning, organizational and partnership development, collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution, and effective marketing.



Schedule training in 2003, perhaps in conjunction with the Strategic Plan implementation workshops described in Action C.8.1. Responsibility: TR, CVB, DOC

*Action C.8.3: Obtain Funding to Enhance Regional Tourism Organizations*

Apply for economic development funds through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and/or USDA Rural Development (RBEG/RBOG grants), or similar programs, to expand capacity of regional tourism organizations so they can broaden their missions/outreach to address tourism challenges. Assist regions in strengthening their capacity to build partnerships with private, public, tribal and nonprofit organizations to address local/regional issues related to tourism and recreation. Help them develop strategic programming that will increase revenues from high-value, low impact visitors, particularly during off-peak times, consistent with local values.

Responsibility: DOC, TR, TAC, FA

*"Work towards 'working together, cooperation, etc.,' rather than 'have it my way or not at all' attitude."*

- Online Survey Participant

*Action C.8.4: Coordinate Strategic Plan Implementation & Monitoring through Dept. of Commerce*

Continue to assign responsibility for Strategic Plan coordination and monitoring to the MTRI Coordinator at Department of Commerce. Include responsibility to communicate not only with MTRI, but also with the regions & CVBs, advisory team and other stakeholders about the status of Strategic Plan implementation. Consider joint planning effort between DOC and FWP for 2008-2012 Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan and Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Responsibility: DOC, MTRI, FWP

*Action C.8.5: Form an Implementation Team of Private/Public/Tribal/Nonprofit Representatives*

Create a Strategic Plan Implementation Advisory Team consisting of key representatives from stakeholder groups (private, public, tribal, nonprofit). Schedule one or two meetings annually to discuss the implementation status of Strategic Plan actions. Address successes and challenges, and ways to overcome obstacles. Encourage stakeholder representatives to identify ways in which their respective organizations can assist with implementation, develop partnerships, or seek resources to support the program. Responsibility: DOC, TAC, MTC, MTRI, Trb, NPO, Biz

*Action C.8.6: Coordinate Implementation with Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity*

Ensure that key components of the Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan are included in the Business Montana Strategy for Economic Growth. Coordinate with the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity to address tourism and recreation issues, and to link tourism with other economic development initiatives (business recruitment, retention). Responsibility: DOC, MTC, BTA, MEDA



Action C.8.7: Develop a User-Friendly System of Annual Reporting on Status of Strategic Plan

Create an annual Strategic Plan Report Card, which provides an update of implementation status. Provide user-friendly mechanisms for implementation partners to report progress/successes/challenges to the Implementation Coordinator. Provide copies of the Report Card to the TAC, MTRI, Advisory team, regions/CVBs, stakeholder groups, elected officials, and give a presentation on successes/challenges at the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation. Responsibility: DOC, MTRI, TR, CVB, NPO, MTTA

***"If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves."***

- Thomas A. Edison

Measures of Success for Objective C.8:

- ♦ Positive participant evaluations of implementation workshops and training for regions
- ♦ Amount of funding obtained to build capacity of tourism regions
- ♦ Participation in Advisory Implementation Team, and accomplishments
- ♦ Linkages between Tourism Strategic Plan & Montana Strategy for Economic Growth
- ♦ Success of Plan coordination, monitoring and reporting, lead by Department of Commerce
- ♦ Combination of Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan and SCORP for 2008-2012